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# CHRISTIAN COURIER

*A Reformed Weekly*

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## Freedom threatened in B.C. construction industry

Bert Witvoet

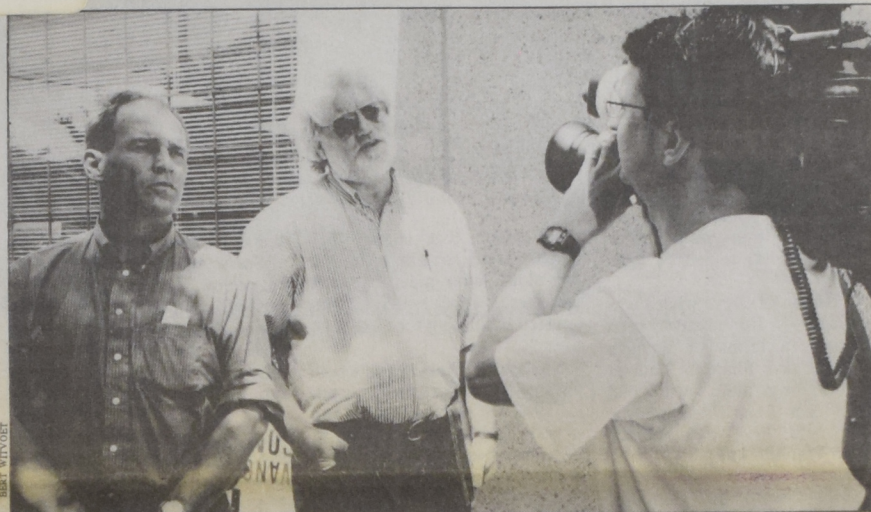
VANCOUVER — Premier Glen Clark is no friend of construction workers who are not associated with the traditional building trades unions. That's what eighty-some protesters in front of Clark's constituency office proclaimed on signs and through speeches on Friday, June 20.

The premier, who for many years was an organizer for the building trades unions and who received critical support from them in the last election, is accused of paying off his debt by

introducing legislation on June 25 that will greatly benefit unions affiliated with the Building Trades Council (BTC) but will hurt others.

The legislation will make it easier for BTC-affiliated unions to organize the construction industry and to freeze out non-union workers and workers associated with alternative unions like the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) and the General Workers Union of Canada (GWU).

Both business and alternative  
See CLAC page 3...



CLAC reps Frank Kooger (l.) and John Kamphof are interviewed for television in front of Premier Clark's constituency office.

## Sisters find each other: a story of hope



Sharon Visscher (right) hugs sister Sue Bishop at Edmonton's international airport.

Jessie Schut

EDMONTON — Bystanders at the Edmonton International Airport on June 19 may not have been aware of the miracle they were witnessing when two young women ran toward each other and tearfully embraced at the arrivals level.

The two women, one blonde, one dark-haired, were actually total strangers, but they greeted each other as long lost sisters. That's because they were long lost sisters, who were hugging one another for the first time in their lives.

The adoptive father of one of the women stood off to the side, watching the happy reunion scene. "Isn't it marvellous?" he remarked, shaking his head in wonderment.

The remarkable story of the parallel lives of two birth-sisters who met each other for the first time at ages 28 and 29 reads almost like a fairy tale. A local TV station which caught wind of the story and broadcast it on the news that evening called it a story of hope. Sharon and Sue, the two sisters, agreed, and were

eager to tell that story to *Christian Courier* readers.

### Sharon's story:

"I always prayed for a baby sister when I was a child," says Sharon Visscher. "I never imagined that God had answered that prayer, but kept it secret for nearly 29 years."

Sharon was adopted shortly after her birth in 1967 by Arie and Geraldine VandenBerg. At the time, Arie VandenBerg was the pastor at Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville, Ont. Sharon joined an older brother, Mark, who'd been adopted two years earlier.

After the Bowmanville pastorate, the VandenBergs moved several times: first to Essex, Ont., when Sharon was four, then to Clinton, Ont., and finally to Edmonton, where she com-

pleted her high school education, became a nurse, and in 1988 married Leroy Visscher.

In 1990, their daughter Rebecca was born; her birth was the catalyst for Sharon registering with the Ontario Adoption Disclosure Registry.

"When I looked at my beautiful baby girl, I realized that my adoption no longer affected only me," she says. "Rebecca also would miss half of who she was. It made me wonder about the circumstances of my own birth."

### A long process?

Sharon filled in a request form with the registry. She received a reply telling her that since nobody had filled in a reciprocal form requesting information about her, there was little they could do except put her on

See SISTERS page 2...

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## News

# Sisters see God's guidance in their reunion

... continued from page 1

a waiting list. When her name got to the top of the 15,000 adoptee name list, one of the two social workers who conduct searches for the province would research her case and provide her with more information about her birth mother. That would probably take seven years.

"After a while, I kind of put it behind me," she says. "In fact, when my dad left for a trip out east this spring, he'd offered to do some more digging into my roots for me while he was there. I told him not to bother."

A week later she received a letter from the Northumberland Children's Aid Society that began, "Dear Sharon, We are writing to inform you that your birth sister has registered with us...."

"I couldn't believe what I was reading — I'd always been thinking in terms of a birth mother," says Sharon. "I never dreamed my mom, who had given birth to me when she was 16, would have had another baby 13 months later."

Sharon contacted case worker Ricarda Sword in Cobourg, Ont., and was told she should write a letter to her sister, which the social worker would pass on. It would be the first step in actually meeting each other some day.

## Sue's story

Jim and Betty Bandstra adopted a baby girl whom they named Susanne in 1968. She joined an older sister, Francine, 10, and an older brother, Mark, 5. The Bandstras also lived in Bowmanville; in fact, they had attended Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church until a second church, Maranatha, was formed, shortly before the VandenBergs arrived at Rehoboth.

"I always knew I was adopted," says Sue Bishop. "It was kind of cool, like: 'Hey, I'm adopted! I'm special!' My birth mother had told the agency that she wanted me to be brought up in a Christian home with two parents, and I was thankful



Sharon Visscher (left) and Sue Bishop share some "sister moments" as they look over old photos and catch up on 28 years of news.

she'd made that choice. My parents were amazing, and we got along with much laughter and love. I never really was interested in looking for birth relatives."

Sue's sister Francine was both physically and mentally handicapped, but the two sisters had a very special relationship. In fact, Sue took post-secondary training at Centennial College to become a developmental services worker. Later, she and her mom opened a flower shop together in Bowmanville.

## Difficult times

Three years ago, Sue married John Bishop, a man whom she describes as "the most wonderful person in my life." Life was good. Then came the difficulties. First, Francine died. Then John's dad died. And the final blow was the discovery that she and John wouldn't be able to have children.

After the initial grieving, the couple decided to apply to adopt a baby. The case worker told Sue that the fact she was adopted herself was significant; it could be a positive factor in being chosen by a pregnant woman as a parent for her child. Sue and John decided to register with Ontario's Adoption Disclosure Registry in an attempt to get more information to add to their adoption application. They

did so in January of 1997.

Sue's mother picked up a registered letter for her at the post office in late May. Over the phone, Sue told her mom to open the envelope and read the letter, and that's how she found out that she had a sister. "It came as quite a shock," says Sue. "I never really imagined my birth mother having a child before me. But after the shock wore off, I thought it was a truly wonderful thing."

Sue contacted the same caseworker, Ricarda Sword. She was also told to write a letter to her "sister," a letter that gave a general outline of her life, but no identifying characteristics such as last names, the names of their parents, or where they were now living.

## The pieces come together

Sue wrote her letter and put it in the mailbox, but Sharon, in her eagerness to be connected with a real, live, sister, faxed her letter to the social worker the very next day. The social worker forwarded the fax to Sue on Friday afternoon, three days after the process had begun.

Sharon had opened her letter with the words, "Dear Sister: You found me! I've been waiting six years for you to register." Writing about her life, she said, "I was born in Ontario in 1967. My adoptive dad was a Christian Reformed minister. My adoptive mom was an RN.... She died of a brain tumor when I was 19...."

"To read that she was Christian Reformed — I couldn't believe my eyes. I picked up that letter and drove over to the flower shop where my mom and dad were working," says Sue. "I began to read it to them right there in the shop, and I was just

bawling my eyes out. All the customers got to hear the story."

## I know my sister

Then began the guessing. It wasn't long before the community had put the puzzle pieces together. Sue's sister had to be the little girl pastor Arie VandenBerg and his wife had adopted when they were in Bowmanville. Her name was Sharon!

"People kept coming into the shop and showing me pictures of Sharon in old church directories," says Sue. "It just freaked me right out! I phoned Ricarda first thing Monday morning, and said to her, 'I know who my sister is!' She couldn't believe how I'd found out."

Ricarda Sword immediately facilitated a telephone reunion for the two of them. The first conversation lasted 2 1/2 hours, and after the initial emotional moments, it was like they'd known each other for a long time. They knew they wanted to

saying. We really weren't strangers when we met."

The women are amazed at the similarities and connections in their lives. Both have an older brother named Mark, and both went camping with their families. Comparing pictures, they realized they both had the same taste in wedding dresses. They discovered that they both visited the same Santa one Christmas and had their pictures taken with him. There are even distant family connections going back to their Dutch roots.

"On Sunday, we went to Leroy's mom's house and I met his 'beppe,' Anna Toornstra," says Sue. It turns out that Beppe Toornstra was a girlhood friend of my Beppe Loukje Bandstra; they grew up in the same village in Friesland."

## God's guiding hand

"When you register to find out more information, there's always a chance that things won't work out," says Sharon. "What



Sharon (left) and Sue posed for photos years ago with the same Santa Claus.



meet face to face as soon as possible.

"My parents have said that when God closes a door, he opens a window somewhere else," says Sue. "These past few years, I've felt a lot of doors slamming in my face. And then, God went and opened a huge window for me by allowing me to find my sister."

## Parallel lives

The two sisters especially marvel at the wonderful way things have turned out. Sue says, "As soon as I knew we had similar backgrounds, it made everything so much easier. I could say words like 'doekje' and 'broekje' and 'gezellig' and not have to explain what I was

if your new family members are Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, or have a totally different lifestyle from yours? I wondered if that's the way it would be with Sue. Now we can see how God's guiding hand was involved all along."

She candidly admits that as a child, she hated the word "adoption." "Kids can be cruel," she says. "Being adopted made me different. Classmates sometimes teased me about it, and it hurt. I was truly thankful for the family I grew up in, but I just wished I'd been born to them."

"Meeting Sue has been a wonderful healing experience. The stigma is gone, and I feel restored. I'm totally thankful for everything that's happened."



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## News

# CLAC could lose out under B.C.'s new union rules

... continued from page 1  
unions are crying foul.

The move by the government follows a 1996 report to B.C.'s Minister of Labour which spelled out that "a pronounced shift has taken place since the early 1980s when as much as 85 per cent of non-residential construction was performed by contractors under agreement with the building trades. Today, the trend has changed significantly with the majority of the market going to contractors who do not have an agreement with the building trades."

According to CLAC, "the likely effect of the legislation as currently composed will be to restore the American-based building trades unions to their historic monopoly control of the sector."

## Imposed agreements

The most controversial provision is the introduction of sectoral bargaining. The bill divides the construction industry into seven sectors: industrial, commercial, institutional and high-rise, residential, sewer and water mains, road building, hydro-electric power, pipe line.

In each sector, bargaining will be done by a council of trade union associations that represent workers in the sector. Whatever agreements will be hammered out in each sector will then automatically apply to any new firm whose workers agree to join a union.

In a story in the *Vancouver Sun*, Maureen Enser, executive-director of the Urban Development Institute, predicts that "labor costs in the largely non-union residential construction sector could rise by as much as 30 per cent, driving up housing costs and making some projects uneconomical."

Defenders of the bill say that the proposed legislation will stabilize the industry by settling all agreements at one time.

But this stability goes at the expense of freedom for business and alternative unions, say opponents. CLAC, for one, could be a big loser in this scheme.

Since CLAC is a multi-craft trade union that represents workers in all sectors of industry, including construction, health care, transportation, retail, security, hospitality and manufacturing, it will not be the dominant union in any construction sector. Even though it represents about 3,000 construction workers in B.C., it will not be



Members of the General Workers Union joined CLAC workers in their protest.

big enough in each sector of the construction industry to be able to lead the bargaining for that sector.

## Alberta said No

In Alberta a similar attempt by the Alberta and N.W.T. Building and Construction Trades Council was thwarted this year when the Alberta Labour Relations Board dismissed an application to forbid non-traditional unions, like the CLAC and the Canadian Iron, Steel and Industrial Workers' Union, to represent construction workers in the province.

Board chair Robert Blair acknowledged that allowing only a particular group of trade unions to represent workers would bring stability to the construction industry, but it would be contrary to the principle that employees should be free to choose their own bargaining agent.

The Alberta board also rejected another request by the same trades council to compel alternative unions to register and bargain with the rest of the construction industry. Blair argued that the real purpose of this request was to limit the ability of alternative unions to represent their own workers.

## How pro-labor is the NDP?

Meanwhile in B.C., the NDP government plans to help the building trades unions accomplish what their counterparts in Alberta could not. "It's ironic that a pro-labor government is taking away the rights of workers to join the union of their choice," says Neil Roos, B.C. director for CLAC. "The place of a trade union as the legitimate voice for workers is compromised when it is afforded a monopoly position through legislation."

avoiding an adversary stance in contract negotiations, is accused by mainstream unions of settling for lower wages and benefits, and thus making it more difficult for companies organized by BTC unions to compete.

CLAC public affairs director Ray Pennings says that CLAC is generally more reasonable than the big unions and sensitive to market realities. It also gives workers the right not to belong to its union.

## Can't be stopped

Pennings was in Victoria on the day the legislation was introduced. He does not think that with an NDP majority government the legislation can be stopped. But he hopes to influence the process so that CLAC can continue to carve out its unique place within the sectoral agreements.

He was assured that the legislation will not immediately change existing conditions and that CLAC will have a right to participate in sectoral bargaining. But he says that there are too many uncertainties at this time to know how seriously the existence and autonomy of CLAC will be threatened. Speaking in the language of his environment, he indicated that there were "huge mountains" between now and the final outcome of the legislation.

In the meantime, business and developers are upset about the proposed changes. They fear that the changes will raise wage costs just when the industry is emerging from two recession years.

CLAC, which prides itself on

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## Editorial

# Everybody loses when governments pick favorites

The Russian Duma has just passed a bill that favors traditional religions. The B.C. government has just introduced a bill that favors traditional construction unions. In political terms that is called establishmentarianism. In Russia the Orthodox Church and Islam will have been established if President Yeltsin signs the bill; in B.C. the labor church of powerful unions will have been established if the bill becomes law, as everyone expects it will.

The two governments are doing pretty much the same thing: forgetting that governments are called to do justice to all citizens and show favoritism to none, they allow their significant powers meant for the common good to be used for sectarian purposes. In Russia it's the Orthodox and Muslim groups that benefit the most; in B.C. it's the unions affiliated with the Building Trades Council that are the recipients of special status.

One B.C. cartoon by J. Rice gets it right. It features five construction workers standing at prayer, saying in unison: "Our Glen, who art

in power, hallowed be thy name, thy legislation come to pass...." The "Our Glen" is Glen Clark, the premier of B.C., who used to be an organizer for the building trades unions. His NDP-led government is responding to pressure from the unions which, in the name of stability, seek laws that are especially hard on business, as well as on non-unionized workers and alternative unions. The cartoon combines the notion of an unholy alliance between labor and government with the suggestion of religious devotion to self-interest.

## An unhealthy dependence

The reality of these patronage situations is that nobody benefits in the end. It is obvious that when some get a larger slice of the pie than others, those "others" lose out. And for the sake of justice we have to stand up and protest the very real suffering caused by unfair practices. What is less obvious but nevertheless true, however, is that those who get the large slices also get shafted in a spiritual and long-range way.

The Orthodox Church in Russia, for example, misses out on being led and protected by the Holy Spirit in a challenging encounter between itself and other Christian churches. If the Orthodox Church cannot hold its own against competing groups, it's time to re-examine its own mission. Has the gospel of Christ been compromised over the ages? Has the heavy accent on ritual, hierarchy and institutionalism quenched the Spirit? An open and free society allows many opportunities for correction.

In addition, depending on the government for survival is a dangerous game. There usually are pay-backs for that kind of arrangement. Churches, too, are urged by Christ to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but that does not include party loyalty. Loyalty belongs to God. The government is God's servant to do right, to punish the wrongdoer and to create room and opportunities to flourish for all those who seek to do right. Seeking special favors from government is preventing the government from doing what's right and just.

## Construction workers don't benefit

Those B.C. workers affiliated with the building trades unions will not benefit, either, in the long run. It's quite possible that creating situations which drive up the price of construction will drive jobs out of the province, as several business leaders are predicting. And what's to prevent the government from promoting traditional unions in other sectors of the economy, thus driving up the prices of all those goods and services that construction workers also make use of?

And who's to say that a powerful union with

monopoly privileges will not some day turn against its own workers? Already there are complaints that the large unions, so used to fat-cat days when they controlled 85 per cent of non-residential construction, are not serving the workers as well as the alternative unions, something that is backed up by trends in the industry that show more and more B.C. construction workers preferring alternative unions or no unions to the building trades unions.



"Our Duma, who art in power..."

If you cannot earn your keep by the way you run an operation, and this applies to churches as much as to unions, you should not be in the business. Reality is a great tester of validity and strength when there is no cheating going on. The only winner in this game of patronage is Satan. He hates fair rules in the arena of life. The ultimate outcome of unfair protectionism is the oppression of the just.

The teacher in Ecclesiastes had it somewhat right when he wrote: "And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from men's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after wind." We would hesitate to say that all achievement springs from envy, but we will say that envy by the Orthodox Church of Russia and the Building Trades Council in B.C. is what drives the so-called pursuit of stability. "Stability" is the smoke screen for the insecure and greedy fat-cats of this world. **BW**

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## Letters

# It's wrong to bring God down to our level

I wonder how many of your subscribers can follow the front page story in the June 13 issue of CC and benefit from what was written. Blessedly, your editorial helped a great deal to "unpuzzle" the reader, but still....

My direct reason for writing is to comment on what Walter Brueggemann said in connection with his critique of 1 Samuel 15: "Either Yahweh is stuck with an ideological Samuel or they are both not very winsome, he said. 'Maybe Yahweh was having a bad day.'"

### Strong disapproval

When I read this, I was hard pressed to know whether I should continue reading the article. Initially, I put the paper down

and felt totally turned off. Such disrespect from Brueggemann for our heavenly Father I can do without. He can call me oversensitive, old-fashioned or whatever, but Brueggemann, who feels it appropriate to thus bring God down to our human level of moody experiences, has, for me, lost all his winsomeness and then some.

Please, if possible, forward to Walter Brueggemann my strong disapproval and displeasure with that type of commentary about God and his anointed prophet and judge, Samuel.

Concerning the topic of the story itself, the word "suspicion" seems to have characterized the reason for the conference, much more so than the word

"trust." I get the feeling that the word "trust" was used in order to be able to get away with the word "suspicion." This did set the wrong tone from the very beginning.

### Accurate translation needed

Over the years, I discovered the Concordant Literal Version of the Scriptures. The foundation of this translation is a deep and reverend respect for God and his Word. Even a cursory investigation of the venerable Authorized Version makes it evident that its translation is much too often an interpretative translation instead of a linguistic one. This, to me, is also an indication of insufficient appreciation and awe for God and his Word.

I believe, that before we begin to interpret, we must possess, as accurately as possible, the exact words of God, objectively translated. Then, and only then, with prayer and true humility, can we with confidence begin to examine and re-examine carefully what it is that God has revealed.

A suspicious approach to the Scriptures is not an edifying one. But, perhaps, expecting to be edified while reading of the explorations of Scripture by Bible scholars is also outmoded?

Thank you for having counterbalanced the lead article with your editorial.

Peter Feddema  
Kitchener, Ont.

## Alpha is an effective tool

Please allow me to make a few comments to add to the story "Alpha Program Meets Opposition," by Alan Doerksen, in CC, June 13. I will make no bones about the fact that I have found the Alpha course a highly effective evangelistic tool and have seen it used in the UK, the Netherlands, Romania and here in Toronto.

One of the strengths of the course is that it can be easily modified to suit varying worship preferences and cultural needs. Hence, its interdenominational appeal. For me, the team at Holy Trinity Brompton (London, UK), where the course originated, can be characterized by their love of God, their desire to share the gospel, their utter, modesty and keen

sense of humor.

As letters published in the "Letters" page in the *Anglican Journal* (June 1997) point out, the Alpha course at St. Paul's (Anglican Church) has become both the catalyst and scapegoat for problems which, unfortunately, run much deeper. As a result, St. Paul's has not only cut Alpha (which resulted in the baptism of a significant number of people), they have cancelled their entire evangelism program for one year.

### No set agenda for response

I do not want to take the issues at St. Paul's on board, (except perhaps to encourage people to continue to pray for unity within the church), but please

permit me to make some quick points about Alpha, to avoid possible misconceptions.

In the first place, the Holy Spirit is not the focus of the entire course: It is an integral part. In fact, Alpha is simple but systematic theology in an up-to-date jacket. While the Holy Spirit must, therefore, be included, and is the focus of two of the sessions, there is no set agenda as to how one should respond!

Unfortunately for us rational beings, the Holy Spirit does sometimes work in puzzling ways — but always for the up-building of the community and with hallmarks that can be described as the fruits of the Spirit. The notion of second-class citizens is both foreign to this and, frankly, unbiblical.

Another essential component of Alpha is that of hospitality. Participants share a

meal together in a small group setting, fostering a sense of community. Leaders work as facilitators, and participants are encouraged to ask questions without being given any ready answers. The emphasis is on searching Scriptures and finding applicable truths and principles. Everyone's comments, including doubts, are valued, shared and given space. It is a set-up that makes it very easy for one to invite a friend or skeptical inquirer.

My intention is not to promote Alpha as the only program of its kind, but it is one that has been used as an effective tool, worldwide. I could write a lot more, but doesn't this already sound like just the kind of thing you'd love to invite your neighbor to?

Renee Kok  
Toronto, Ont.

## How faithful is the church?

What are the challenges for the Christian community (the church of Christ) for the next century? To live life, in all its aspects, on the terms of the Kingdom of Christ!

Is the Christian church in modern times known for this characteristic? In many details of life we contentedly hobble along to the secular beat of the world. It comes out very clearly in the Christian community's life in the marketplace, particularly in politics and social relations (labor unions).

We support, vote for, are a member of or even run for office in a political party which officially separates religion and politics, hiding behind the concept of separation of church and state. We don't even sense the difference between the two concepts. "Keep religion out of politics" is an important part of the parties' political "confession of faith."

When getting a job, we pledge to abide by the rules of the union, by its constitution and bylaws, which are the "confessions of faith" in labor relationships. The "closed shop" clause in many labor contracts should definitely be unacceptable for a Christian. But we pledge anyway with the motive of being a Christian influence in the labor union!

When stores opened on Sundays, how many Christians rose to the occasion and refused to dishonor the Lord's Day? Very few indeed! Many Christians followed suit, because, they said, we had no choice." Their position required it. So what? What did Jesus say again? "Anyone who loves father or mother or brother or sister more than me, is not worthy of my love." It may well be that, for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ, we have to go under.

But even then Jesus says: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad" (Matthew 5:11).

Syrt Wolters  
Victoria, B.C.

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## Agriculture/Letter

## Kids find farm life foreign but fascinating

Our county (Renfrew, Ont.) has a very active agri-food education committee. For the past 10 years I have been part of that committee. Our biggest achievement has been five annual "Farm Comes to Town" events for Grade 5 students.

Once a year in April, 350 to 400 Grade 5 students and teachers from various schools in our county come to a large arena in Renfrew and are taught about agriculture and farm animals by farm volunteers.

Seven stations are set up, of which five display live animals. The beef station has a beef cow and her calf; the pork station has a sow and her piglets; the sheep station has sheep and lambs; the poultry station has hens, eggs and an egg grading facility; the dairy station has three breeds of dairy cows, calves and a milking facility where the cows are milked with pipeline milkers; the bee station has everything but live bees; the field and crop station has displays of machinery and foods we eat.



A Yorkshire sow nurses her piglets.

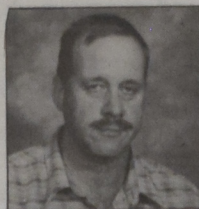
About 60 farm volunteers spend a full day (8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) at the arena. There is an evening program for families which is always very well attended. Children love touching the little piglets.

The Grade 5 classes come from as close by as across the road from the arena to as far away as 70 km. We have about 200 students during the morning and another 200 students in the afternoon. They and their teachers get to spend 15 minutes at each station. When each class has visited all the stations, they come together in one large group to watch a milking and sheep-shearing demonstration. Every year that's the highlight of the day. As the youngsters sit on rows of straw bales, which are positioned so that everyone can see, their intent faces say they love it — many of these kids, whether rural, small town or city, have never watched a cow being milked or a sheep shorn.

### Didn't think bees lived on a farm

The students and their teachers are given evaluation forms to fill out what they learned, liked or disliked and what surprised them. I spend a few evenings going through stacks of

Farm  
fodder



Maynard Vander Gallen

evaluations.

They learned plenty: what a runt is (smallest pig in a litter); that you can pick a pig up by its hind legs; that shearing sheep doesn't hurt; that a cow has four different stomach compartments; that pig hair is used to make paintbrushes; that there are 70,000 bees in a hive; that 99 per cent of a cow is commercially used for something; that some fields have tile drains under them; that we should drink three glasses of milk a day; how a cow, a bull, a steer and a calf differ; that the comb on a chicken indicates how healthy it is; that people need to take a course before they can spray crops — and much more.

What were some of the things that surprised the students? Pigs don't have sweat glands. They didn't think farmers were so high-tech. You can retrieve metal out of a cow's stomach with a magnet. Bees only sting once. And this one: "I didn't think bees lived on a farm."

### Not prepared for reality

The beef producers at the beef station showed a video of a beef cow giving birth to a large calf. The calf is half way out and

things stall, so the cow gets up and swings her hind end around a few times until the calf drops down and the cow licks the slimy calf. Many of the youngsters found it disturbing — one student fainted. But that's life on a farm!

Things they liked: The animals, especially the pigs and piglets. The milk break (halfway through we give each student a carton of milk). Sheep shearing. Milking cows. The big tractor....

Things they disliked: The video. The movie. The calf was in a hut by herself. Two cows urinated. Farming is a lot of work. Too little time at each station. The milk break was too short. And this one: "The cows peed and pooped in my face."

Our agri-food education committee, which is made up of farmers and teachers who live on farms, will meet monthly again starting this September to plan our "Farm Comes to Town" for next April, and our teacher agri-food workshops in January.

Maynard Vander Gallen farms in the Ottawa Valley (Renfrew, Ont.). He's still getting (good) comments from last summer's buttermilk column.

## We need to 'exegete' the culture around us

Thank you for your extensive reporting and honest editorializing with regard to the recent discussion of biblical hermeneutics at the ICS (CC, June 13).

I realize that not having been in attendance makes it difficult for me to comment, but let me venture a few questions based on your reporting.

My first question has to do with Dr. Olthuis' comments on interpretation. People who believe they read the Bible without interpreting are accurately identified as being "naive and dangerous." However, we are urged a little later to read the text "as if for the first time," forgetting what we know and have learned. If it is "naive and dangerous" to think we can read the text without interpreting in the first instance, is it not "naive and dangerous" to think we can do it in the second?

My second question relates to identifying with the poor and the suffering. Olthuis is reported to call for "a reading with." He advocates reading with the stranger, the widow, etc. He says such a reading will "alter" the message. While this approach certainly leaves us in a dynamic and maybe even "wild and uncharted" territory, and while altering the message may be preferable, it also means we must set aside the larger context of Scripture as a whole.

### Covenant context

God repeatedly is an advocate, a present help with the poor and the oppressed throughout the Bible. But that identification occurs within the context of what God is doing with his entire creation. It is within the context of covenant that God requires attention to the hurting. A covenant that is written on our hearts and is in keeping with God's law and God's intentions from long ago is the larger context we cannot overlook.

Identification with the suffering is not for the sake of identification but for the completing of the will of God. It is a matter of obedience. It may not be clean-cut or neat. It probably won't be predictable. But the end, the goal, is clear. God has acted, acts and expects us to act within the bounds of his covenant. He is remaking and restoring his original creation.

Our reading of the texts and our walking with the poor must

be in concert with God. Is that really so "wild" and "uncharted"? A faithful exegesis may not be the "uttering of a polished tongue"; it may indeed be the "stammering of our hearts." But we should make no mistake that what we are exegeting are God's unshakable purposes.

### Shifting sands

My final question concerns what I perceive to be the most disturbing hermeneutical suggestion. When it is reported that "our reading is always a response to the ancient Yes of God that is behind the Scripture," and when we are urged to forget previous interpretations and read simply in the light of our present experiences, I wonder whether this isn't a territory where the church has gone before. Getting behind the text and dismissal of the significance of history are nothing new (Bultmann). Are we merely dressing up old theological problems?

I'm concerned about the extent to which Olthuis is indebted to Derrida. If these strains of thought and theology are being recommended to us, we should be aware that we are being asked to change our assumptions. Our understanding of God and the way he has revealed, and does reveal, himself will need to change.

All this is done in an attempt to be relevant, and it is our responsibility to address the needs of our world. But I am not convinced that this hermeneutical suggestion will get us there. Our credibility with the suffering and those who do not know Jesus seems at risk if we let our assumptions shift with the shifting sands of our present culture.

Our focus must be on how to exegete the culture around us. If we begin to understand the complexity of life in the '90s, then we can begin to speak the old story in fitting and relevant ways to new situations. We can speak of hope and assurance in the midst of hurt and tragedy.

I suggest we review our principles of exegesis, and then struggle together with how to speak in relevant ways. A good starting point can be found in *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* by George Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder.

Steven Venhuizen  
Yonge Street Mission  
Toronto



## Arts/Media

## Book Review

## A helpful guide for parents of disabled kids

### YES, YOU CAN!

#### A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities

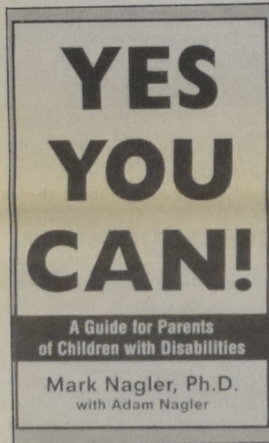
by Mark Nagler and Adam Nagler.

Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd., 1997. ISBN 0-7737-5866-6. Price \$19.95 (Cdn.); \$13.95 (US). 296 pp.

Reviewed by Jake Kuiken, a social worker in Calgary and father of a hearing impaired daughter.

Becoming the parent(s) of a child with a disability is, and can be, a very lonely experience. First, it doesn't happen to everyone, so it's often difficult to find someone with whom you can share this mostly unexpected experience.

Similarly, the disability isn't always obvious at first; that this wonderful gift of a new person is somehow different from what was expected can be a frightening experience. Then there's the experience of finding out what it all means, sometimes slowly, sometimes more



suddenly. And then there's the rest of the world to deal with, many of whom simply will never understand or recognize the uniqueness of it all.

Mark Nagler has cerebral palsy. His disability was first recognized by his 83-year-old grandmother who had herself given birth to 10 children. That was enough of an experience to realize there was something wrong with the young Mark two months after he was born in Calgary. For Mark, it was the beginning of a long journey that continues to this day, as a professor of sociology at Renison College, University of Waterloo.

His parents' commitment, accompanied by their unwillingness to accept the conventional wisdom of the day, made a notable contribution to his achievements. Studied findings confirm their approach, suggesting that there are three things which distinguish children who, in spite of their disabilities, do well: committed parents, good programs and money — lots of money!

For some parents, having a disabled child is an overwhelming experience, and like all such experiences, everyone seems to cope differently. I once heard someone make the point that there are two differences between parents of a

child who has a disability and those that don't. First, they experience a chronic sadness; and second, their emotional highs are higher, while their low days are markedly lower.

Although not directly, Mark Nagler makes a similar point. The book winds its way systematically through the experience of becoming the parent of a child with very special needs. Beginning with the different emotional reactions; on to the parent as advocate; dealing with family and friends; types of professionals and services; issues related to education, finances, stress, burnout, housing, long-term care, etc. Albeit in general terms, all receive Mark and Adam Nagler's careful attention, including some real-life examples.

#### Affirmation for parents

Essentially this book is a very handy manual for those who are new to the experience of having the additional responsibility of nurturing a child who has a disability. It's an affirmation of what parents can do if they're prepared to accept a life-long challenge. The book provides a good guide along the way, identifying many of the issues with many helpful suggestions.

Perhaps its most useful contribution is the constant and thoughtful affirmation that parents are advocates for their children, especially those with disabilities. Parents know their children far better than any professionals do; only parents constantly integrate all of the experiences and information that inevitably come their way. That perspective is a powerful source of strength to continue the advocacy that is frequently necessary in the face of ignorance and single-dimension experts.

Although the book deals quite adequately with a wide range of disabilities, I was somewhat disappointed with the fact that its major emphasis is on physical and developmental disabilities. Although there are periodic references to sensory disabilities, there's a bit of a missed opportunity to speak to a wider audience. For instance, while the hearing impaired are noted, the index doesn't provide a quick route to the many issues that parents with deaf children confront — cochlear implants, auditory-verbal communication, sign language, etc. Similarly, the work of the world-renowned Canadian Daniel Ling in the area of auditory-verbal communication for the deaf isn't referenced.

#### Not just for parents

While the book is written specifically for parents and children with disabilities, it may also have a wider appeal to parents who see themselves as advocates for their children. Like many other things that seem at first to relate particularly to children with special needs, there's every opportunity to transfer many of the issues to the challenge of parenting more generally. In other words, it's a book well worth reading for just about anyone who's interested in becoming a better-informed parent. I recommend it!

## Texas fights 'gangsta rap'

AUSTIN, Tex. (EP) — The State of Texas is taking a stand against "gangsta rap" music. A rider tucked into the state budget will prevent state agencies from investing in companies that produce or distribute the controversial music, which promotes violence and degrades women. State Senator Bill Ratliff, chair of the budget committee, said he wants to be sure that state dollars don't go to

companies that "poison the minds" of young people.

The rider would cover all state institutions, including universities and pension funds. The ban also covers music that promotes bestiality, drug use, gang activity, necrophilia, pedophilia and hate crimes. Record industry officials oppose the ban, saying it infringes on free speech.

## Zondervan communicates

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (EP) — Zondervan Publishing House which publishes Bible and religious books, won the highest award granted by the Communicator Awards for its free e-mail information service. Winners in other categories included Allstate Insurance, the American Lung Association, Eastman Kodak Company, Motorola, Exxon, the U.S. Postal Service and the U.S. Air Force.

Zondervan provides information in more than 30 categories. For a complete list of categories, send an e-mail message to [list@info.harpercollins.com](mailto:list@info.harpercollins.com). Type a hyphen in the subject line, and in the body of the message type two words: subscribe zpulist.

## 'Black' Bible produced

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (EP) — The Congress of National Black Churches, which represents 65,000 churches with a membership of more than 19 million people, has published the African-American Devotional Bible, in both NIV and KJV editions. The Bible includes 312

daily devotions written especially for black Americans, celebrating their faith experience and cultural heritage, and providing a context for understanding the Bible in ways that are relevant to the everyday lives of African-Americans.

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## Church

# Russian Duma rushes through bill restricting religious freedom

Lawrence A. Uzzell

MOSCOW (Keston) — As widely predicted, the Russian Duma's new bill on religion sailed through its third reading on June 23 in just a few minutes, with virtually no debate. Some 300 deputies voted in favor and eight against.

The changes adopted after the second reading of June 18 were supposed to be merely stylistic and editorial, but in fact, involved substantive changes in the text. If the latest version of the bill becomes law, religious bodies not favored by the state will now have even fewer rights than they would have had under the previous week's draft.

President Yeltsin has yet to reveal whether he will veto the bill. A source at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow told Keston News Service that U.S. President Clinton personally raised the issue

with Yeltsin during the economic summit in Denver.

The most important of four new amendments would require that a religious body must have been active in Russia for at least 50 years to receive recognition as "all Russian," and even then only at the discretion of the national government.

This section, like others, appears to strengthen the role of the local authorities, which in many regions have been enacting laws and decrees restricting the rights of minority faiths.

## Must register

An expert on minority religions in Russia told Keston that the legislation would create problems not only for foreign missionaries but also for long-established Russian faiths.

Baptist human-rights activist Vladimir Oyven said the bill

would make it harder for independent-minded Baptist and Pentecostal congregations to leave the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, which was founded during the Soviet era and therefore would be eligible for preferential status as a so-called "religious organization" rather than as a far less privileged "religious group."

One of the changes made behind closed doors would require so-called "religious groups" to submit to the same formal re-registration process as the privileged "religious organizations," even though they would get none of the advantages of registration. Those which refused could be liquidated. Another change would delete "charitable activities" from the already short list of activities authorized for "religious groups."

A well-placed Duma source

confirmed on June 23 that the new bill would enable Russia formally and openly to re-establish the Council for Religious Affairs, the state agency which supervised churches during the Soviet period. The 1990 law on freedom of conscience abolished that council and forbade the national and provincial governments to create any other such executive organ with regulatory responsibility over religious bodies. Since the current bill would explicitly repeal the 1990 law, the revival of the council would be legal (but not inevitable).

## Elevating Islam

Other late changes in the bill elevate the symbolic status of Islam (along with Orthodoxy), soften the commitment to Russia's obligations under international human-rights pacts, and narrow parental rights to educate their children according to their own religious views. At least one change softens the bill: religious bodies would now have until the end of 1999, not 1998, to complete the man-

datory process of re-registration.

Surprisingly, one of the deputies favoring the bill was Mikhail Men, son of the celebrated Orthodox priest Aleksandr Men. Deputy Men told Keston News Service that public opinion is running strongly against foreign religious groups. "If this parliament were given a bill to expel all non-Orthodox and all non-Muslims from Russia, they would vote for it," he said. Men said that President Yeltsin is certain to sign the bill.

But other Duma sources disagreed. Vyacheslav Polosin, the religion committee's chief specialist on church-state relations, said that two features of the bill which Yeltsin is especially likely to reject are the 15-year period before a newly formed religious body can acquire the rights of a "legal person," and the provisions denying non-citizens such basic rights as the right to form even an unregistered prayer group. Both he and his colleague Lev Levinson told Keston that the outcome of the struggle within the presidential apparatus is still undecided.

# CRC synod delegates confess racial sins on their knees

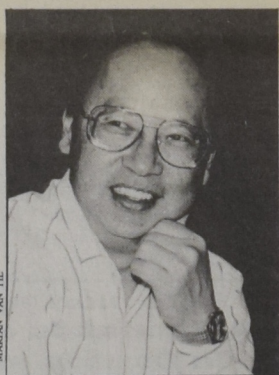
Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — In what were undoubtedly the most moving and unexpected moments at this year's Christian Reformed Church synod meeting, the 188 delegates got out of their seats and knelt by their chairs, expressing sorrow to God over how they and their church have failed to include as equals fellow church members who are not part of the denomination's still largely white, Dutch-descended majority.

Many remaining audience members joined delegates on their knees. Most of the audience and the media, including photographers and local TV news people, had already left the Calvin College Fine Arts Centre for the evening at shortly after 9 p.m. The debate on inclusive language for God had just ended and synod's president had assured everyone that they would meet only for another 20 minutes or so.

But the Spirit seemed to have other ideas. The session ended at 10:30 and was described by participants as "incredible," "amazing" and "a time of healing."

The event was precipitated by two things: remarks to synod by former Synodical Committee on Race Relations head Bing Goei, and recommendations synod had before it which would "remind" the churches and agencies to fulfill a 31-year-old mandate given by Synod 1966 to work toward



Bing Goei

ways to do it. But the leadership doesn't give this a high priority. I believe God led synod to make those decisions [about diversity], but we haven't done much with them."

## Biblically driven

Goei says, "This is a biblically driven agenda, not a political agenda. It says in Revelation that the Lamb shed his blood for all folks, in order that we can be a kingdom of priests, and to serve our God.... To deny any [church] members that opportunity is a denying of Christ's reconciling work. It's that serious."

When delegates responded, Goei says, they "spoke from their hearts, acknowledging that maybe they weren't as aware of this issue as they should have been, and that they'll work to use everyone's gifts. There was some painful sharing. Some were in tears. It was a time of healing for the denomination."

Al Luke, current director of the Race Relations committee, which is part of Pastoral Ministries, led the delegates as they knelt in prayer. The prayer was occasionally punctuated by "Amen" and other interjections. Delegates finally began leaving nearly an hour-and-a-half after it all began. They left silently, one by one, obviously very affected by what they had just experienced.

developing a racially and ethnically diverse church.

Along with that "reminder," synod was also asked to instruct all CRC agency boards to reflect a greater number of ethnic minority members; to urge the churches to use all classical and denominational resources to publicly witness against racism; and to increase the church's financial support so these efforts can be implemented.

Goei blamed the church's leadership and boards for the little progress made in so many years. "When you have leadership that disregards their mandate to diversify boards and agencies, then God can't bless us," he asserted. He told CC later, "When leadership wants something desperately and feels passionate about it, they find

# Netanyahu pledges opposition to Israel's 'anti-missionary' bill

JERUSALEM, Israel (EP) — A recent bill banning the distribution of "missionary material" is awaiting approval by Israel's Parliament, the Knesset. A worldwide flap was created by news of the proposal, a law which would punish possession of evangelistic material with up to a year in jail.

Messianic Jews living in Israel have been watching their country's political scene closely, especially in view of increased number of ultra-orthodox Jews holding Knesset seats.

## Unfavorable ruling

Rulings have not been favorable for Messianic Jews; in 1989, the Jewish Supreme Court declared Jews who believe in Jesus are no longer legal Jews.

Messianic Jews are worried about the possibility that Christian material — including the New Testament — might come under attack. A messianic action committee was formed to contact leaders and raise awareness of the issue in the global evangelical community.

Friends of Israel executive director Elmwood McQuaid has received reassurances from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu of his opposition to the controversial bill. In correspondence addressed to McQuaid dated June 3, Netanyahu acknowledges that the bill concerning missionary literature has "created quite a stir among our many Christian friends in the United States."

"I would like to assure you that this bill does not have the support of the Israeli government. It was introduced as a private members' bill by Nissim Zvilli of the Labor Party and Rabbi Moshe Gafni of the Yahadut HaTorah Party," writes Netanyahu. "With fewer than 30 Knesset members present at the session, the bill succeeded in passing a preliminary reading in the Knesset. But to become law, it must pass three additional readings. The government strenuously objects to this bill and will act to ensure that it does not pass."

Some observers note the bill was introduced after a million Christian booklets were mailed to Israeli residents by Morris Cerullo, an American television evangelist. The proposed bill is viewed as a way to squelch activities of Messianic Jews.



## Church

## Considerate wisdom

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate...." (James 3:17).

Cecil Rhodes, the 19th century expansionist South African statesman and financier, was known for his precise manners and impeccable dress code. Yet he wore his social correctness with a considerate heart. For example, when Rhodes was hosting a formal dinner at his Kimberley home, one of the guests was unable to arrive until the very moment of seating. He had no time to change his travel-stained and rumpled clothes.

The young man's obvious discomfort in this company of glittering women and dapper gentlemen was made more acute because Rhodes, usually so punctual, delayed his appearance at the table. The dusty fellow felt like a pig in a hen house, surrounded by clucking criticism.

### Graciousness

But when Rhodes finally entered the room to greet his guests and begin the meal, they were taken aback. Rather than sporting formal attire, he was clad in a shabby old blue suit! Now it was the young man's turn to feel at ease while the others wondered at their being over-dressed.

Only the household servants ever knew the whole story. Rhodes had been descending the stairs as the last guest arrived. Noting his travel-weary look, Rhodes had returned to his dressing room, removed his black tuxedo and quickly slipped into the sorriest suit he could find in his closet. It was his way of politely declaring the misfit to be welcome at his table.

Cecil Rhodes had class.

While we would all commend "considerateness" as valuable social grace, it is interesting that James elevates it to the level of divine wisdom. What makes it so?

### Goodness

Maybe it has to do with the fact that a considerate person takes thought of others. Will Durant, the famous philosopher and historian, was asked for advice by one of his grandchildren. He summarized all his wisdom in "ten commandments." At the heart of them is this advice: *Do not speak while another is speaking. Discuss, do not dispute. Absorb and acknowledge whatever truth you can find in opinions different from your own. Be courteous and considerate to all, especially to those who oppose you.*

We would all like to have friends like that! Certainly we expect God to treat us that way.

But may be "considerateness" is more than just thoughtfulness. Stan Wiersma, writing under his pen name "Sietze Buning," ex-

## Chapter & Verse



★ Wayne Brouwer  
Andrew Kuyvenhoven  
Laura Smit  
Al Wolters

plored the religious roots of being considerate in his collection of folk poetry titled *Style and Class* (Middleburg Press, 1982). Much of what we display in life, said Sietze Buning, has to do with "style" — we watch how others dress and act, and then we try to imitate those we admire. But "class" is living out of the nobility of your inner character, said Sietze.

He tells this little story to illustrate what he means: *Queen Wilhelmina was entertaining the Frisian Cattle Breeders' Association at dinner. The Frisian farmers didn't know what to make of their finger bowls. They drank them down. The stylish courtiers from the Hague nudged each other, and pointed, and laughed at such lack of style. Until the queen herself, without a smile, raised her finger bowl and drained it, obliging all the courtiers to follow suit, without a smile.* (p.17).

Sietze Buning ends with this note of judgment: *The courtiers had style, but Queen Wilhelmina had class.*

### Grace

While that makes for good story-telling, Sietze Buning takes it one surprising step further. He links style to the wisdom of the world, and class to the wisdom of heaven. The former tries to get us to fit in with the right crowd, looking the right way and eating the right foods while driving the right vehicles. That's style.

But class — real class — happens to us when we realize that we're children of God! And if God is King, we are nobility! Princesses and princes in the realm of the great ruler!

Children of the King don't need to prove themselves! Nor do they need to flaunt their status. If they had learned well at home the true worth of their lives, they can treat others with courtesy and respect. They can be considerate.

It's a religious thing. It's also the best kind of wisdom.

Wayne Brouwer is senior pastor at Harderwyk Chr. Ref. Church in Holland, Mich.

## Christian Coalition gets new leaders

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Former Reagan Administration cabinet secretary Donald Hodel and former U.S. Congressman Randy Tate are the new leadership team for the Christian Coalition.

Hodel, former U.S. Secretary of Energy and Interior, has been named president of the Christian Coalition, and will have day-to-day management, fundraising, strategic and public speaking responsibilities. Tate, 31, has been named executive director and will assist Hodel in management responsibilities, concentrating on political strategy, grassroots action, and influencing legislation on Capitol Hill.

They replace Ralph Reed, who is resigning from the Christian Coalition in mid-July to work as a political consultant. Reed will remain on the Christian Coalition board of directors.

Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, will assume the title of chair of the Christian Coalition.

## Vancouver Adventist gave away millions

VANCOUVER (EP) — A successful industrialist who contributed millions to Seventh-Day Adventist organizations died May 25 in Vancouver. Dr. Chan Shun, 79, was born in China and set up a successful garment business in Hong Kong. His Crocodile brand of clothing gave him wealth, which he gave away in abundance. Through the Chan Shun Foundation, he donated more than \$26 million dollars to mostly Adventist educational institutions. Reports indicate Chan died the exact moment the Chan Shun Pavilion at Loma Linda University (LLU) was being dedicated in his name. The building houses cancer research facilities and is connected with NASA research programs at LLU.

## Canadian mission aviators monitor Angola

GUELPH, Ont. (MAFC) — Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada says it is closely monitoring developments in Angola, where Canadian pilots are continuing flights for churches and aid agencies in an ongoing effort to help the west African country recover from the effects of 20 years of war.

MAF Canada has 14 missionary families, mostly from Ontario, living near the major cities of Luanda and Lubango at air bases for its King Air and Caravan aircraft. These bases are more than 600 km from the northeastern region of Angola where news agencies are reporting renewed fighting between government and rebel soldiers.

"We are in constant communication with our people in Angola, and we are committed to doing everything we must to ensure their safety," said Gene Parkins, executive director of MAF Canada. He said pilots have been asked to observe restricted flight guidelines over designated regions.

### Providing essential links

Canadian missionary pilots, along with support staff including aircraft maintenance engineers and flight schedulers, first entered Angola during the civil war in 1989 at the request of Angolan church leaders. Then as now, any form of land transportation was extremely

dangerous because millions of land mines had been buried into roads and fields. Angola has an estimated 10 million land mines and the highest number of amputees per capita of any country in the world, according to UN statistics.

Over the years, MAF Canada pilots have provided essential airlinks for missionaries and the national churches. In addition, funding from the Canadian International Development Agency-International Humanitarian Assistance (CIDA-IHA) program has made it possible for MAF Canada aircraft to transport personnel and cargo for many aid organizations, including the United Nations and

the World Food Program.

MAF Canada participates internationally with other MAFs around the world. Its pilots, communications specialists and support staff are Christian missionaries providing assistance in 40 countries. The Canadian MAF operation in Angola also includes an aviation training school for Angolans.



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## Feature

# Fake dogs and the mushroom shortage

by  
Amber Goddard

Sometimes I forget to eat. I can go hours, days even, without eating. I think the only true-to-life meals I ever have are either the big family holiday turkey, mashed potatoes, and pecan pie for dessert dinners, or the occasional trip out for breakfast.

Usually, I make it through a day or two on a glass of milk and a slice of bread; whole wheat of course. It's prettier. I do get hungry, and I have some really bad headaches when the hours add up, but somehow I don't always make the connection, and by then it's too late to avoid the headache even if I do eat. I know it's not a healthy habit, but most habits aren't if you think about them long enough.

The day of the wedding was a Saturday, and I hadn't eaten since Thursday. I laid in bed feeling the persistent emptiness of my stomach but having no initiative to stop it. Once I got up, I would have to get ready. Once I got ready, I would have to reminisce and feel nostalgic and my nose would get stuffy, but I wouldn't cry. Then I would have to talk myself out to Ella's car, find the church, perform my bridesmaidly duties, smile a lot, dive for the bouquet, sneak out the back door without having to say goodbye, and come home to an empty apartment.

Then what? I asked, probably out loud.

I pulled my blanket up over my head. "God," I said, closing my eyes and trying to breathe through patchwork, "first off, thanks." I always start my prayers off with thanks, because I figure it's life, and good or bad at the moment of prayer, he gave it to me. I felt like, most of the time, I was way too engrossed in life to like it, but God would al-

ways give me a little nudge and point and say "Hey look, Ruby, — it's life, and you're in it!"

I went on. "Thanks for letting me sleep last night, and for everything else. This Brian-getting-married thing ... I mean, if it's from you, then cool. But the thing is, well, you know ... *you know*, and I guess just let everything go okay today, and please help me to feel something about it and give me some sort of peace when I do, because I'm pretty sure I'll feel sad. Thanks again. In Jesus' name. Amen."

When Brian had told me he was getting married, I wasn't surprised or shocked or even mildly taken aback. We knew it was only a matter of agreeing on a date, and as soon as that was settled he would finally be walking — no, make that running — down the aisle with Annie. Not since Lloyd Dobbler had met that girl who's name I can never remember in "Say Anything" and pointed out the glass in the road so she wouldn't step in it, had any two people been more destined to be together than Brian and Annie. I even liked her, and that in itself is a monumental statement.

He told me on a Tuesday night. We were at Tastee-Mart. I always liked Tastee-Mart, because their booths are upholstered in green leather, but they have yellow curtains on their windows. It gives the feeling of being at an aunt's house, a crazy aunt that my family wouldn't associate with but who I would get along with wonderfully because she would sing strange songs that no one had ever heard of, out-of-key, and stitch pictures of kittens and balls of yarn for me. Of course, there were no such aunts in my

family, and if there had been ... well, she would have had curtains that most definitely clashed with her upholstery.

I had ordered a small order of fried mushrooms and a hot fudge sundae, and Brian had ordered some sandwich thing. He told me while we were waiting for our food.

"Did Annie tell you?" he asked, which was funny because Annie and I didn't talk much, so I knew what he was going to say. "We set a date."

He was so happy. I smiled in reflection. "Really? When?"

We were interrupted by a small Asian woman. She first sat Brian's sandwich thing in front of him, then placed my sundae on the table. A drop of hot fudge fell from the icecream and landed on the table. "No mushroom," she said. She lifted her red checkered apron and wiped up the fudge. I must have looked confused, because she repeated herself: "No mushroom."

This finally made sense to me, so I tore open the plastic around my spoon and assured her my sundae would be enough. She wanted to fix me something else because she thought I looked like I needed a meal, so I ordered a water. This didn't satisfy her at all, but it made me feel better because it was free and if I didn't drink it I didn't have to feel guilty about being wasteful. She walked away mumbling.

I started to eat my sundae, then I realized I was supposed to be celebrating Brian's engagement. He was chomping happily at his sandwich, so I went and grabbed him a spoon so he could join me. I don't think I've ever had a sundae as good as the ones at Tastee-Mart, mainly because they use real live Cool-Whip instead of that stale, curdled spray-can whipped cream. Brian understood this, and would always purposely eat around the Cool-Whip so I could have it. After years of friendship, this was unconscious on his part. I still noticed every time. Maybe I was waiting for him to take my whipped cream and run.

"She wants you to be a bridesmaid," he informed me.

This was one of those moments I was sure I was supposed to engage in some contemplation of irony, the irony of bridesmaidhood and life, and being absolutely single in a world of double, and sharing an icecream with the only male I'd ever felt completely comfortable with who was marrying his One, while I had never even met my

Five, especially not my One. This moment didn't feel ironic, though.

"Really?" I asked, because I was always surprised when Annie was nice to me. I couldn't help feeling like she must know how unwilling I was at first to accept her, which was so unfair of me because she was completely real and true and I was so not that, giving me no right to

Brian went on talking about what he wanted, how he hoped everything would be and how excessively happy he was. I knew I was letting him eat most of my icecream, but I was too intent on watching him be happy. Happy people fascinate me, the way their sentences always sound perfectly formed, and I think if I could form perfect sentences I would always be



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*Happy people fascinate me, the way their sentences always sound perfectly formed, and I think if I could form perfect sentences I would always be happy.*

question her at all.

"Does she have all the dresses and flowers and napkins and colors and all that wedding stuff picked out yet? Where are you having it?"

Then I remembered he had never told me when the date actually was. So he did, because that was the only thing he could tell me. She hadn't picked out anything definite except her bridesmaids and her maid of honor. So I was a definite, I thought.

happy. I wanted to tell Brian how excited I was for him, because I was, but I was afraid it would come out sounding fake, or even worse, like a courtesy thing, because I was hungry and my head was starting to hurt. So instead I told him I'd miss him in my kitchen in the mornings.

Brian and I had only gotten in one major argument in the two years we'd been sharing an apartment. He thought it was silly for me to buy dog food for



my dog Edgar because I didn't have one. A dog named Edgar, that is. I explained how I had always wanted a puppy, but my dad was allergic, so every time I went to the store when I was little I'd head straight for the dog food aisle and plan out all the things I'd buy for my puppy Edgar. Now that I made my own money, I went once a week and bought a bag of dog food just because I could, even though our landlady didn't allow pets.

Brian said I was wasting money that I could use for real stuff, like food, but I figured the dogs in the alley who always got to eat Edgar's plentiful leftovers enjoyed eating more than I did. Somehow this had caused an hour of screaming, and we didn't speak for about a week. He finally got tired of me slamming doors and conceded defeat, or something like defeat without actually losing anything. He even bought me a dog food dish, but we agreed I would only use my personal spending money and not our joint grocery money for the dog food.

Since then we had been through a lot of food, discussed every philosophical dilemma of the century, seen each other's hearts broken by nameless Not One's, and done about a million loads of laundry.

Yes, I had concluded, I would miss him.

Now, three months later, I was still lying in bed trying to convince myself to get up and get ready. I wondered if I stayed there long enough I could go back to sleep and miss the whole thing, then I wouldn't have to get ready. I had paid for my dress, though, so I decided to get up.

At first I thought I had lost my dress. I wondered what would happen if I showed up at the wedding in my flannel nightgown and said "Hey, Annie, sorry I lost the dress you spent a month picking out but I thought this flannel might accentuate the color of your flowers." Then I remembered I had laid out my dress the night before, something I never do because I'm never organized and I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing, but somehow I had known I'd be late so there was my dress, all laid out and pretty on the green chair by my window.

Annie had picked some nice dresses, if the judge of nice were a fan of ruffles. I myself have never liked ruffles because they

always blow around if there's a big gust of wind. Her dresses were pretty, though, even with the ruffles, and even if they were pink. With the pink ruffly dress on, I felt absolutely girly-like. Sometimes I wondered about myself, whether when...., I mean, if I ever get married, if I

floor. I was amazed that she was ready and already at my apartment, and I thought vaguely that I must be really late. Ella was my ride to the wedding and my best friend. I mean, she was my best friend, and she was my ride, not that she was giving me a ride to my best friend, though I

be braided, though it knew it was too wild to go unbraided in pink ruffles.

Finally, braided and dressed, I sat down on the end of my bed. I had decided to skip make-up, because I felt it would be a disaster. Ella looked up, placing a scrap of paper from my floor in

her book to mark her place. She smiled.

"You look like a girl!" she exclaimed.

"I look like a bridesmaid." I answered. To me, this summed up everything. Here I was, in all my pink glory, and I was thinking about nothing girlish, nothing happy and weddingful — I was too busy remembering yellow curtains and hot fudge sundaes. I stood up and took a deep breath.

"Let's go," I think I said. As if I had been waiting for her. Driving to the church, we talked about our own lack of marriage prospects, our lack of job

one thought in my head long enough for it to grow into a real thing. I've just got a lot of little embryonic ideas running around in my head without fully developed nervous systems, and none of them have ever been around long enough to grow up."



We were late, and had pulled up just in time to see the wedding party lining up outside of the church. Ella got out and ran to the front entrance, and I jumped into my place in line. The music was already playing for us to walk in, and luckily I was the last bridesmaid in the line of twelve. My guy who walked in with me was Brian's best friend, Rand. He took my arm and smiled at me, and I remembered he might be looking for an apartment and made a little note on the chalkboard in my head to talk to him about it later.

Everything was nice. Annie looked beautiful. Brian looked beautiful. The flowers were beautiful. Nice, nice, nice. I resolved then and there never to get married, because having to plan that much niceness would send me over the edge, and years later when our hair was all faded Ella would come to visit me in Bob's Home for the Happily Disturbed, where I would ramble incoherently about coordinating the matchbooks with the napkins. I almost cried at the "I do" part, though. It was nice.

We left the reception right after Ella accidentally caught the bouquet. She gave it back and told Annie to try again. I kissed Brian on the forehead, told him to be happy, and we left.

On the way home, I thought about the water I had ordered to make the woman at Taste-Mart happy. I had never gotten it. At the time, I didn't even think about it, but riding home from the wedding, counting how many white cars we passed because I thought there were way too many, I remembered that water. I had never wanted it, but I had ordered it, and I hadn't gotten it. I think I wanted to be angry, but it was just a cup of water.

I thought about my life, and how I was in it, and that sad was a feeling, and that made me happy. I made Ella pull over for icecream.

Amber Goddard is an English major at a local junior college in Bakersfield, California. She's a published poet and is editor of Liquid Ohio.



*I thought about my life, and how I was in it, and that sad was a feeling, and that made me happy...*

*...Now three months later I was still lying in bed trying to convince myself to get up and get ready.*

can find a dress without ruffles.

Another thing — if I'd rather have an off-white dress than a pure white one, does that mean I'm only sort of a virgin? These thoughts served no significant purpose other than to occupy my mind with subjects of no consequence while I tried to comb the tangles out of my hair which was still wet from the night before. Sometimes I think my life is one long thought process, and that it's no wonder I wake up tired.

As I was combing my hair Ella walked in and sat on my

guess that works too. She wasn't a bridesmaid, so she had on a comfortable-looking black dress that would never hang out with my pink ruffles in a closet.

She pulled a book out of a purse that I knew wasn't hers and read as I combed, then braided, my hair. My hair is thick and black and it hated me that morning, as it always hated to





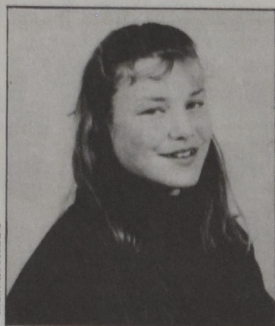
## Feature

# Don't neglect

## An introduction...

Serendipity is the happy coinciding of various positive things. I experienced serendipity a few months ago when we received two short articles by high school students about disabled children. That same week someone sent us "seven secrets disabled kids wish they could share." It was as if the Lord were saying to us, "How about focusing on disabled kids for a moment?"

And so we do. Disabled people or kids are not the only group that needs attention from time to time, but they are an im-



Kara Koopmans

portant part of our obligation to do justice and love mercy.

Jim Vanderlaan, director of Disability Concerns for Christian Reformed Pastoral Ministries, once wrote: "For us, too, having a disability in itself isn't such a big problem, especially because Christ makes it part of our following and serving him. 'My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness,' (2 Cor. 12:9). What hurts is being ignored, neglected and excluded — especially in the church" (Breaking Barriers,

Winter 1995).

And so we thank the writers of the three articles who help us in not ignoring, neglecting and excluding kids with disabilities. From their own experience, the two students, Kara Koopman and Heidi Rhebergen, are agreed that when it comes down to ordinary human contact, disabled kids are not that different from those without disabilities. And to that Anita Corrine Donihue adds: accept disabled kids for who they are.

The Editor



Heidi Rhebergen

## My brother Micah is a Down's syndrome child

Heidi Rhebergen

The contractions had begun. It was time to go. She called her husband, and he rushed her to the hospital. A few hours later the ordeal was over, and the doctor announced, "You have a beautiful baby boy."

Then the nurses took him and bathed him. They gave the woman her nicely cleaned and bathed baby a few minutes later. She looked into his face and saw the eyes, nose and mouth that were typical of Down's syndrome. It was then she knew he was different.

How would she tell all her relatives and friends? She cried herself to sleep that night in her hospital bed.

### Three chromosomes

Down's syndrome is not a disease — it is a condition a child has even before he or she is born. It happens when the fetus is growing and the cells are splitting. There are three different types of causes for Down's syndrome. Regardless of whether it was the first, second, or third cause, Down's syndrome is always a result of the presence of three Number 21 chromosomes in every cell.

My brother Micah has Down's syndrome. His condition developed because of the most common reason: trisomy 21.

For some of you it must be hard to imagine what it would be like living with a handicapped person as your brother. Well, I know firsthand, and to tell you the truth, I don't notice much of a difference between him and my other brothers.

I was born first, and when he

was born I was delighted to have a baby brother. I was too young to understand that he was different, and so I treated him as I would have treated any little brother. I smothered him with love, pestered him and took away his toys. I'm sure that I often became jealous of all the attention he received, but I was too young to understand that he needed that special attention.

Now, of course, I understand all this and try my best to be helpful with him, although sometimes I don't do so well.

### Encouragement needed

Children with Down's syndrome have both mental and physical disabilities. For some children these are only minor; for others they are not so minor. Micah is surprisingly smart and knowledgeable. He is an excellent bike rider, can read and loves to draw pictures. He works very hard to try to achieve at the same level as his friends.

Many DS children are never able to accomplish these things, and this can cause them real frustration. DS children need lots of encouragement because often their development is slower than usual.

Some of the physical characteristics of a child with DS are: the eyes, nose and mouth are small, and grouped together at the centre of the face. Often these children seem to have an extra fold of skin over the eye which causes them to look Oriental.

The nose of a Down's syndrome child is often characterized by its small size and narrow nostrils. A person with Down's syndrome often has a



Micah and his visiting Grampa Kuyvenhoven and Micah's devoted companion, Shadow, at home in Driftwood, B.C.

part of his or her ears folded over. Occasionally some people with DS keep their mouths open and their tongues hanging out. This is because they often have an enlarged tongue. The neck of a DS child often appears to be short and broad.

### Not that different

Micah has a few of these characteristics, but I've never really noticed that he's that different. To me Micah is my brother and I love him; he's not some dumb handicapped person whom we try to avoid. He's smart and he'll sense if you have any resentment towards him. He

can be very kind and loving. If you are kind and caring to him, he will be loving to you.

About 40 per cent of all DS newborns are born with congenital heart disease. This disease will eventually require surgery. It often causes holes or canals in the infant's heart. Down's syndrome children often have heart problems. Micah does not have these heart problems and for this we are very thankful.

Micah is now a teenager, and he definitely acts like one. He can be very kind and loving at one moment and the next moment he is swearing and calling

his parents names. Living and caring for Micah can sometimes be a real struggle. He can be very stubborn and refuse to help out; he can also be a better worker than I am.

He is smart for his condition and, therefore, he is smart enough to figure out that he is not normal. It can be very frustrating for Micah to realize that he is not as good at sports as others his age. He has lots of true friends from his class, and going to a Christian school has really helped with this.

### It's not contagious

I watched a movie once about a Down's syndrome child whom his parents just abandoned because they were too scared to take care of a DS child. My mom and dad do a real great job with Micah, and I'm glad for this. If Micah were to ever get married to a "normal" person, I would be happy for him. I don't think he could handle living alone or with someone else who has a disability.

Down's syndrome is not contagious, so you may go up to a person who has DS and ask him or her about life. Often they live very lonely lives, especially in the past when isolation of handicapped people was common. My brother is well known in the school for his good sense of humor and his friendliness, and I hope that it will always be that way for him.

Heidi Rhebergen, who aspires to play basketball at this year's B.C. Summer Games, is a Grade 9 student at Buckley Valley Christian High School in Smithers, B.C.



# disabled kids

## Look past the handicap to see a normal girl

### Kara Koopmans

Can you imagine not being able to eat through your mouth, unable to sit and unable to communicate?

I know such a person. Her name is Karlene. She is my eight-year old cousin who is multi-handicapped. In some ways Karlene is like any other eight-year old, but she's also very different.

Karlene is very dependent on others. She is unable to sit. My aunt has to put a body brace on her to keep her back straight, and then strap her into her wheelchair. In order for Karlene to stand, she must be strapped securely in a standing frame.

Karlene cannot eat through her mouth, thus she is fed by a G-tube that runs into her stomach. Most of her feeding is done through the night by a small pump. This enables the formula to go into her bloodstream a drop at a time so that she doesn't vomit.

One of the most frustrating things for Karlene is that she can't speak, so she can never tell

you what she did at school, what she wants or how she is feeling.

Karlene is in Grade 3. Her classmates have to put a crayon in her hand and help her color. Karlene doesn't ride on the regular yellow school bus; she is picked up by the handi-bus which has a wheelchair lift.

By now you may think Karlene is totally different from any other child, but you'd be surprised. When you look past the handicap, you'll see a sweet little girl. In many ways Karlene is the same as any other girl.

First, Karlene can show her emotions. She will cry when she is sad and smile easily when she is happy. Have you ever seen an eight-year old who wants to go to bed when she isn't tired? I haven't. Well, Karlene dislikes it too. When she has to go to bed and isn't tired, she complains and won't go to sleep.

Karlene loves to go on holidays. This past summer when we camped at a lake with her, she loved to go for walks. On the beach she really liked it when you let sand sift through

her hands. When you set her in a dinky and pushed her through the water, she'd burst out laughing.

Like any other child, Karlene loves attention; if she is ignored for a length of time she will complain in her own way.

The highlight of Karlene's week is school. As soon as you sit her down in a room with other kids, she starts to show she's happy. Though Karlene can't do much, she still has made many friends at school. For instance, a boy from Karlene's class once phoned my aunt asking if he could play house with Karlene. He saw past her handicap and treated her like one of his classmates.

I'm sure most of you know a handicapped person. Instead of focusing on how they are different, we should remember they are people who have feelings and emotions just like we do.

*Kara Koopmans is a 4-H speech champion enrolled in Grade 9 at Bulkley Valley Christian High School in Smithers, B.C.*



Karlene (right) with her parents, Stan and Dorothy, brother Kameron and sister Janessa.

## Seven secrets disabled kids wish they could share

### Anita Corrine Donihue

Disabled kids sense how people react to them. We may not say or do anything unkind, but they can tell how we feel. Although they're not always able to express themselves, they understand a great deal more than they're given credit for. Little, thoughtless things hurt: whispered remarks; snickers when things go wrong; even body language. Here are seven secrets that may help us to better understand how they feel.

#### 1. Accept me

Don't be afraid to get to know me. I may be a little slow physically or mentally, but I am good company when you give me a chance. Take time to enjoy me.

#### 2. Don't smother me

I like hugs, but sometimes I feel smothered. Ask me first if you may have a hug. If I say Yes or start to hug you, try a quick one and see how it goes. If I push you away, don't be hurt. Just respect my need for space. Hugging me down on your

knees at my level where my head can come up over your shoulder works. I might turn my back on you at times when you start to hug me. Backwards hugs can be neat.

#### 3. Don't talk baby talk.

Yuk. I'm a kid, not a baby or a puppy. At times I have much difficulty talking. It may sound funny like baby talk. Hey, I'm really trying to say the words right. Sometimes I can't talk at all. I may be able to sign with my hands. I might be cute and little but remember: talk with me like you would with other kids my age. Just slow down a bit.

#### 4. Let me do my best

Quit telling me I can't do things because I'm disabled! Let me try. It may take longer and a whole lot of patience on your part, but I might surprise you. Don't snatch things out of my hands and say you'll do it. Ask me if I want help. I'll be proud, even if it isn't perfect. Please! Don't go back and redo it.

#### 5. Don't feel sorry for me

I enjoy life and can make your life a little brighter, but only if you let me.

#### 6. Be patient

I sometimes say and do things that aren't appropriate. Explain things to me. Help me learn good social skills. Be understanding when I mess up. Let me

know when I've done well. Your praise goes a long ways with me.

#### 7. Fine-tuned frequency

I know God doesn't love me any more than others. I just feel that because of all I go through, he keeps me close to his heart. God placed me here on this earth for a reason. He looks

beyond all my imperfections and sees me as special. Best of all, he loves me just the way I am. Won't you?

*Anita Corrine Donihue is co-author of Apples for a Teacher and lives in Auburn, Washington.*

## Suggested answers to questions often asked about disabled kids

**Q: Does he understand what I'm saying?**

**A:** Most of the time, yes. But slow down a bit when talking with him.

**Q: Can she talk?**

**A:** This will depend on the individual child.

**Q: Why does he speak so loudly?**

**A:** He may not realize how loudly he's speaking because of his disability.

**Q: May I walk along by her wheelchair?**

**A:** Yes. Kids love friendship and company. Don't be afraid to come up close. They are like anyone else.

**Q: Will she ever be able to walk?**

**A:** Usually it's best to say, "We hope so, but we'll have to wait and see."

**Q: May I give him a hug?**

**A:** Ask him. Then respect his

answer, yes or no.

**Q: How can I help, and how much?**

**A:** \* Be willing to help when someone needs it, but not too much.

\* Open a door for a child or grown up in a wheelchair or walker.

\* Be patient, stop and listen when he or she wants to talk to you.

\* Pray for each child.

\* Be a friend.



## CRC Synod 1997

# Inclusive language for God: a 'non-issue' in the CRC?

Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The Christian Reformed Church synod, meeting June 14-20, recommended to the churches a study report on inclusive language for God (see CC, June 27, p. 6). Synod called the report "a sound and helpful analysis of gendered language for God as found in Scripture and in contemporary inclusive-language practices." The study report was commissioned by Synod 1994.



Three report authors: Al Wolters, Mirth Vos and John Cooper: "We 'got it.'"

While not ruling out "gendered language" for God, which Scripture also uses, what the hefty report finds "unacceptable" is "the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach advocated in mainstream academic and ecclesiastical discussions."

Synod endorsed that position, saying that such language "presents a significantly different view of God than Scripture does"; "confuses, undermines or conflicts with" the church's understanding of the Trinity and Christ; involves "faulty linguistic, exegetical and theological reasoning"; presupposes views of Scripture and its interpretation that are "incompatible with the church's confession about ... Scripture"; and "is spiritually dangerous in refusing to accept God as he has revealed himself."

## Great detail

While there were seven committee members who studied the issue, the 10-section report reflects the scholarly style of professors John Cooper and Al Wolters, especially. (Cooper teaches philosophical theology at Calvin Seminary. Wolters teaches classical languages and Old Testament at Redeemer College.)

The report goes into great detail in its analysis. It concludes with related pastoral issues and recommends a policy for the use

of gendered language for God (the term "gendered language" is used to refer to how the Bible presents God's "feminine" and "masculine" qualities).

How the Bible names God (uses what the report calls "personal designators"), which are masculine, is distinguished from terms which describe God or are used as metaphors for God, many of which are feminine.

The report discusses the significance of "naming" in biblical culture, concluding that, while we should be careful to include feminine metaphors when we talk of God, we should continue to use the (masculine) "personal designators" that God uses for himself in Scripture.

## 'Getting it'

The committee was not unconcerned about the pastoral implications of its work; it recognized the difficulty that (particularly female) abuse victims and other hurting people may have, for instance, in calling God "Father."

Committee chairperson Mirth Vos introduced synod's discussion by assuring both delegates and the assembled audience that, unlike at times in the past when synod debated issues relating to women, "the committee did 'get it.'" But she noted that "this report does not have anything to do with women in office." She said, "It's not another skirmish related to that issue. That is a church order issue but this report deals with the heart of God's revelation of himself."

As a counsellor Vos especially understands that many people, especially women, "long for equality within our church life," and included herself among them. She noted that when such people initially encounter inclusive language for God "they intuitively like it. It seems like a good approach." But she encouraged them to "slow down your process a little bit and allow yourself to think carefully." If you don't, she said, your emotional connection will impede you. "Your mind will not want to grasp something else [than the way your heart dictates]."

Before synod debated this issue there seemed to be a

general consensus among delegates approached by CC that, as one of them put it, "this is synod's biggest 'non-issue.'" There was a surprising amount of debate after all. Several Canadian delegates were leery of the strong pronouncements and argumentation they felt the report makes, and of stating unequivocally that use of inclusive language for God is "unacceptable."

Rev. Nick Overduin (Cl. Toronto) objected to calling such use "spiritually dangerous." He said, "It's equally spiritually dangerous to assume that we know everything about how God revealed himself or that he always reveals himself in masculine pronouns.... Little kids grow up thinking God is more like Daddy than like Mommy."

Rev. John Hellinga (Cl. Chatham), however, pointed out that "God commands me to call him 'Father.'" The *Heidelberg Catechism* tells us why, he said: "because God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rev. John Tenyenhuus and Dr. George Vandervelde (Cl. Toronto) didn't like particular the way the report used logic to dogmatically argue its position. A few others asserted that it is too dogmatic and "harsh" in tone.

## Beware the 'pronoun police'

Minister delegates Clayton Libolt (Cl. Lake Erie) and Marvin Hoogland (Cl. Chicago South) were both concerned about how synod saying such language is "unacceptable" would be viewed in the future. "Does that mean someone using this language would be subject to discipline? Or no longer able to teach in one of our institutions?" asked Libolt.

But elder Steven Baas (Cl. Wisconsin) was certain that nothing so sinister would occur. He said, "I want to speak to the notion that this report will result in some Personal Pronoun Police that will 'get' Mrs. Hummeltub for slipping a few feminine pronouns for God into a prayer. That just won't happen."

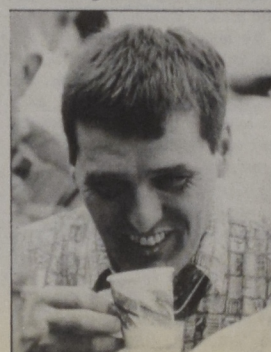
The report's authors and synod's advisory committee said they hadn't discussed the specific implications of what "unacceptable" means, assuming that problems would be dealt with pastorally by the local church.

Scripture must be the basis for guidelines on how to address God because it "is the only infallible source from which we can know God's particular self-

disclosure in human history" and "thus, it is the source and norm for the way God's people speak of him and to him."

Because that's true we can deduce principles that govern gendered language for God:

First, "Christians ought to speak of God in the way that Scripture speaks of God" (such language is not merely "culturally conditioned" to biblical times) ... and translations of the Bible "ought to be as faithful to



Nick Overduin: Little kids think God is like Daddy.

the original meaning as possible...." (That means ruling out translating the Lord's Prayer "Our Father/Mother who is in heaven," but poses no objection (except perhaps in occasional clumsiness of language style) to using inclusive language for fellow human beings when the Bible's original languages mean to indicate all people rather than just males, (e.g., in the beginning of Psalm 1, which has traditionally been translated "Blessed is the man...").

Second, language for God not coming explicitly from Scripture "must faithfully reflect and unfold the biblical presentation of God, not alter, undermine or replace it."

Third, Christians' language for God "ought to be sensitive to the needs and tasks of God's people — to be healed from the effects of sin and evil, to engage people and cultures for Christ, and to stand against the dynamics of the world that conflict with God's will."

Those principles underlie the five guidelines synod adopted:

1. Use primarily the standard biblical names, titles, and other designations for God.

2. Use a variety of biblical language for God.

3. Use masculine pronouns (and other gendered elements of language) appropriately.

4. Use extrabiblical language for God that conforms to biblical language.

5. Recognize that some contexts may require flexibility.

## Usage grows from pain

In its pastoral advice, synod urged congregational leaders to teach members about the nature of Scripture's language for God "so that false ideas about the relationship of God to gender are corrected, and biblically shaped linguistic practices are fostered." Synod wants congregations, as well as poets, hymnodists, preachers, liturgists and church educators to use "Scripture's wide variety of language for God, including feminine imagery."

At the same time, "sound judgment" should be used so that biblical feminine imagery is not misunderstood. And the church should warn its members of the "false teachings and spiritually dangerous aspects of many kinds of contemporary feminism, feminist theology and promotions of contemporary inclusive language for God."

Synod recognized that the issue is complex and that "in part, [such usage is] motivated by legitimate complaints about gender injustice and harm, and is supported by arguments which, though faulty, do not always involve unorthodox theology, unconfessional views of Scripture or resistance to God."

The church must "acknowledge that many people — males and especially females — have been hurt in various ways by male abuse of power and authority, which leads them to be attracted to inclusive language for God." The church must "seek to minister the gospel" to such people in ways that are "effective for their emotional, relational and spiritual healing."

## Healing gender relations

The church must proclaim a biblical view of human gender and gender relations so that both women and men "experience that they are equal in imaging God, equal in Christ, and equally gifted by the Holy Spirit to be prophets, priest and kings, whatever the differences in their God-given natures and roles."

Finally, synod said the church needs to "call upon its members to promote justice and well-being for women and men wherever false notions of gender and sinful gender relations have caused injustice and harm."



JULY 4, 1997

## Comment

# Throwing away the map

## Dear Peter:

A brother of mine once tried to convince the rest of our family that the best kind of holiday driving should be done without a map. Perhaps "convince" is too kind. On the occasion I'm referring to, he grabbed the map, stuffed it into his pocket and then jumped into the passenger seat of my car and directed me where to go. The rest of the family had no choice but to follow (most of them in a second vehicle — I'm glad I was out of earshot).

I had the easy part: I just turned left and right as directed. And despite the distress this incident caused for certain members of my family who shall remain nameless, that particular day turned out to be the best of our family holiday that year. (That we were touring beautiful Prince Edward Island didn't hurt either.)

A couple of weekends ago I went for a drive. I rented a car and left Toronto with a packed overnight bag, a box full of cassettes and a map. Once I was well out of the city, the sun came out and I quickly got onto a secondary highway and enjoyed a wonderful tour around a part of Ontario I had never seen before. But I kept thinking back to the day I had spent with my brother beside me, tugging the map out of my hands.

## *Has our generation thrown away all its maps? The values our parents taught us? Our beliefs? In this age of infinite choice, what keeps us grounded?*

It had been fun then. Could I do it myself? To my chagrin, I found I could not. I suppose the fact that I only had a finite number of free kilometres with the rental may have played a part. But I couldn't quite let go of being in control. I needed the map for direction, and I needed to know where I was headed.

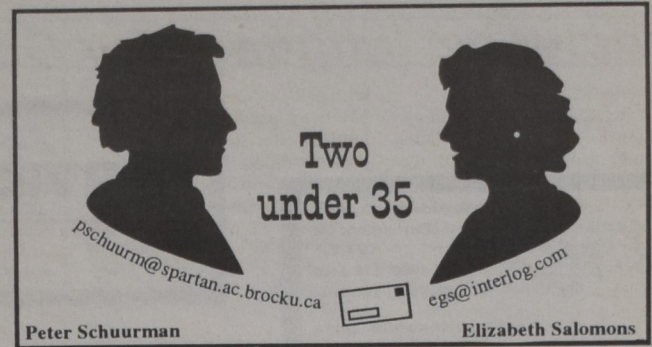
Peter, over the last six months, you and I have written about choices of a number of different types. Jobs. Immigration. Travel. Acceptance of who one is, whether we're talking about one's past or one's future. The question in my mind is what determines these choices for you and me in this last decade of the 20th century?

I cannot put away a map when making a simple road trip, yet there are others who relish that freedom. Those of us who bear the Generation-X label are overwhelmed with the number of choice available to us and this may be why we have been characterized as lacking commitment: we have so much choice we can't choose, we delay choosing, and so we drift along life's path in a seemingly aimless fashion.

Has our generation thrown away all its maps? The values our parents taught us? Our beliefs? In this age of infinite choice, what keeps us grounded? Is this why the endless barrage of decisions seems so overwhelming for our generation? I told a friend the other day that it didn't really matter to me what particular doctrine she professed, what mattered to me was how she lived. Did I really mean that? Do we need to define our road maps within the platitudes of a creed? Or does this become a crutch? Where is our "leap of faith" if all we believe in is simply a summary of all we've been taught? On the other hand, are we rejecting the old maps because they have failed us?

These are heavy questions, Peter. But, even though you and I have yet to talk face-to-face, I think I have a pretty good idea what your response to this letter will be. And it's in anticipation of that response that I boldly ask these questions.

*Restlessly,  
Elizabeth*



## Dear Elizabeth:

Your e-mail flies directly into the bulls-eye of the student heart today. You know, I imagine that in the past, young people were handed more of a "fate" or "destiny." If your dad were a baker in Groningen, you would be expected to be a baker in Groningen. If your mother were the spouse of a wealthy Reformed man, you were expected to be the spouse of a wealthy Reformed man. It wasn't an iron fate, but it was at least very much expected.

Today we have "choice" instead of "destiny."

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" our children are asked, as if their destiny is something they are to create on their own. And as young people, we are confronted with advice from all sides — as if we stand in a summer fair, and different people beckon us from various booths to come and try their wares:

"Come to university and become educated!"

"Join a church that is really friendly and alive!"

"You can always train for a job — travel while you're still single!"

"Be responsible: get a good skill, make money, and invest in mutual funds."

"Don't pursue wealth. Try and change the world for the poor."

"Give me grandchildren before I die!"

With so many voices, students end up in the chaplain's office, saying, "I don't know what to do with my life."

We are free to choose. I heard someone say there are over 8,000 different jobs to choose from in Ontario. What a dilemma! There is nothing more frustrating than having so many things to choose from but no guide for telling you what choices are best — or even what choices are good.

Absolute freedom can be very disconcerting, and some people panic and abandon their freedom by handing it over to someone else — their parents, the nearest guru, or to whatever "map" they stumble upon.

I am reminded of the words of a song called "Pacing the Cage" on Bruce Cockburn's latest album, *The Charity of Night*:

*Sometimes the best map will not guide you/You can't see what's round the bend/Sometimes the road leads through dark places/Sometimes the darkness is your friend...*

That last line is a reference to the end of Psalm 88. There are times — even for great godly people — when the path ahead is not very clear, when they enter a "dark valley." Maybe "choice overload" leads you into a dark valley. We stand anxiously on the edge of the millennium. National unity, church unity, and economic stability are all up for grabs.

I don't know if there are any maps, Elizabeth, (isn't that what faith is all about?) but I do know we need something other than paralysis and despair, which certainly are in ample supply these days. We need a vision for our times, an orientation that will allow us to move forward with wisdom, with courage and with hope. That is the task of each generation, isn't it? And we can be relieved that we are not the centre of the decision-making process: we have God's Word, his Spirit, and his community — plus friends and family — to help us discern. And with that confidence, we drive through the night, not sure of what lies ahead beyond our headlights.

*With courage and hope,  
Peter*

Elizabeth Salomons, 32, is an editor for a publishing company in Toronto and a member of First CRC there. Peter Schuurman, 27, is the Christian Reformed Church's chaplain at Brock University. He's a member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines.



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	<p><b>Anniversaries</b></p>		<p><b>Obituaries</b></p>	
	<p>Vlaardingen Guelph the Neth. Ont. 1947 July 29 1997</p> <p>We, the children of</p> <p><b>CASEY and JACOB (JACKIE) BOSS</b></p> <p>thank the Lord for the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents on July 29, 1997, D.V. "Jesus answered I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6a). Thank you Lord for your faithfulness throughout all these years!</p> <p>We love and appreciate you Mom and Dad, Grandpa and Grandma. May God continue to bless and keep you.</p> <p>Love, your children and grandchildren.</p> <p>Home Address: 18 Eleanor Court, Guelph, ON N1E 1S8</p>	<p>1957 July 8 1997</p> <p>Praise God from whom all blessings flow.</p> <p>With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p><b>TONY and JEAN VERHULP</b></p> <p>May God continue to bless and sustain you. Love and best wishes from your children and grandchildren:</p> <p>Arnold &amp; Anita Verhulp — Abbotsford, B.C.</p> <p>Rachel, Abby Shirley &amp; Dave DeVos — Cambridge, Ont.</p> <p>Luke, Mark, Aaron, Leah Bryan &amp; Christine Verhulp — Grand Centre, Alta.</p> <p>Cheryl-Lynn, Krystle, Nicole Sandra &amp; Barend Spek — Atwood, Ont.</p> <p>Lisa, Jacob, Dirk, Arnold, Komelius Wayne &amp; Colleen Verhulp — Listowel, Ont.</p> <p>John, Matthew, Heather Bruce &amp; Lily Verhulp — Atwood, Ont.</p> <p>Tiffany</p> <p>Open house will be held, D.V., Saturday, July 12, 1997, from 2-4 p.m., at Listowel Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, 345 Elizabeth St. E., Listowel, Ont.</p> <p>Home address: 380 Winston St. E., Listowel, ON N4W 2T8</p>	<p><b>EBELTJE (EILEEN) WIERSMA</b></p> <p>passed away peacefully at Shalom Manor in Grimsby, Ont., on Friday evening, June 20, 1997, in her 89th year.</p> <p>Loved wife of the late Willem Wiersma Sr.</p> <p>Mother of: Elco &amp; Ann Wiersma John &amp; Jane Wiersma Bill &amp; Magdalena Wiersma Sylvia Scholten</p> <p>Grandmother of nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.</p> <p>She is survived by her sister, Thera Rustema as well as six sisters-in-law, all of the Netherlands.</p> <p>The funeral service was held at the Calvary (Flamborough) Chr. Ref. Church, on Monday, June 23, 1997, at 10:30 a.m., followed by interment at White Chapel Memorial Gardens, Hamilton, Ont.</p> <p>Special thanks to the staff at Shalom Manor Nursing Home for their loving care which they demonstrated daily. Our appreciation to Dr. Ireland, Rev. Geleynse and Rev. Van Arragon for their care, concern and support shown to the family. Donations to Shalom Manor would be most welcome.</p> <p><i>Salvation has been accomplished and now we await with those who rest in Jesus the final culmination, when all of creation will be restored to its God intended purpose.</i></p>	<p>Jess, faithful wife of Tom, cherished mother of Stephanie, and loving daughter of Benne (deceased 1986) and Ida De Jong passed away on June 5, 1997.</p> <p>"And my God will meet all our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19) (A verse Jess wrote on Mother's Day card 1997).</p> <p>Jess grew up in Mandaumin (Samia area), graduated as R.N. from S.G.H., studied at Reformed Bible College and served on the mission field in Nigeria from 1958 to 1977. She loved and served the Lord faithfully in her work, home and church with always a song in her heart and on her lips.</p> <p>Also survived by: Tena &amp; John Geerts — Wyoming Jake &amp; Hazel De Jong — Wyoming Marge &amp; Peter De Vries — Burlington Helen &amp; John Caddon — Willowdale Wynne &amp; Gerald Vandezande — Agincourt Betty &amp; Peter Mostert — Ottawa Mary &amp; Sy Wassenaar — Toronto Allan (deceased 1992) &amp; Elaine De Jong — Samia Willa &amp; Henry Westendorp — Harrison</p> <p>Ida &amp; Henry Lunshof — Mississauga Nancy &amp; Garry de Boer — Kettleby Lillian &amp; John Buesink — Hamilton plus many nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews.</p> <p>"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21).</p> <p>Correspondence addresses: Tom Posthumus, 42 Weymouth Dr., London, ON N5V 4E3 Mrs. Ida De Jong, 753 Elizabeth Ave., Samia, ON N7S 2V4</p>
	<p>1972 July 7 1997</p> <p>"Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Eph.5:20).</p> <p><b>AUKE and CHRISTINE BYLSMA</b> (nee DE VRIES)</p> <p>With great joy and thanks to God, we celebrate our parents' 25th wedding anniversary. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless them in the life that they share together.</p> <p>With love and congratulations from: Karen, Sheila, Adam, Vicki, and Jeffrey.</p> <p>We wish to invite friends and family to an open house being held in their honor on Saturday, July 12, 1997, D.V., from 2-5 p.m., at the Clinton and District Chr. School.</p> <p>Home address: R.R. #1, Blyth, ON N0M 1H0</p>	<p><b>Personal</b></p>	<p><b>Teachers</b></p>	
	<p><b>WATERMAN 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION</b></p> <p>on July 26, 1997, starting at 10 a.m., at Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area, White Oaks West Picnic Area (has a shelter in case of rain), on Hwy. 24a, north of Paris, Ont. Bring a pot luck lunch and refreshments. Come prepared with stories. Contact persons: <b>Alida (nee De Wit) Poort (519) 537-7365; Jackie (nee Groenewegen) Hogeterp (519) 537-3469</b></p>	<p><b>ONE TO ANOTHER</b></p> <p>Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5.</p> <p>Write to: #12 923 2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7</p>	<p><b>NEWMARKET, Ont.: Holland Marsh Distr. Chr. School</b></p> <p>is accepting applications for a teacher to teach <b>Grade 7</b> for 10% of the time. Christian perspective integrated with lifestyle is essential. Please apply to:</p> <p><b>Holland Marsh Distr. Chr. School</b> Henry Lise, Principal Fax: (905) 775-2395</p> <p>e-mail: hmdcs@interhop.net snail mail: 18955 Dufferin Street, R.R. #2 Newmarket, ON L3Y 4V9</p>	



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# The Kingdom marches on with or without a quorum

The following is a true account of a school board meeting held in St. Catharines, Ont., this year, with nothing added. I testify to its veracity since I was there. Only the names have been changed to protect the integrity of all those innocent board members who were absent, with or without notice.

## Bert Witvoet

The meeting was about to begin. The chair looked around the room and started counting the school board members. "We don't have a quorum," he announced. "We need seven people to make this a valid board meeting." He fiddled with his papers and wondered how long he should wait before cancelling the meeting.

"Do we need a quorum to pray and read the Bible?" Bill Van Spritsen asked.

"I guess we could do that, alright," the chair said, glad that he could break the silence and do something. He asked the board member who had been assigned to this task to proceed with devotions. Ten minutes later, when prayer and Bible reading had been given due attention, the chair looked around wondering what to do next. The attendance had not changed in the meantime; the number still stood at six.

## The opposite is true

Jack Haddink spoke up next. "Mr. Chairman, why don't we read the minutes of the last meeting and approve them."

"We can read them, but we can't approve them," said Henry Slipsema. "We need a quorum for that."

Jack Haddink scratched his head. "I know what we can do," he said. "We can make a motion

after the reading of the minutes that we don't accept them. That motion can't pass because there is no quorum, right?"

"Right," said the chair.

"Why then, if it doesn't pass that means the opposite is true: the minutes are approved." Jack Haddink was all smiles as he made his point.

The chair nodded his head and agreed that Haddink's proposal had merit. "Will someone make the motion that we don't approve the minutes?" he asked.

Henry Slipsema said, "I'll make that motion," and Corrie Blaker seconded it.

"All in favor say, 'Aye.'"

Five voices said, "Aye" since the chair does not usually vote.

"The motion did not pass because there is no quorum," said the chair. I rule that the minutes have been accepted."

## Good idea!

Corrie Blaker asked for the floor. "Mr. Chairman, as you know we have a tuition reduction drive coming up. Could we ask the ministers of the surrounding churches to pray for the drive? Since this is a spiritual matter, I don't think we need to worry about a quorum. We know that God is willing to honor the request of two or three gathered in his name. And if God is willing to do that, then the pastors should be willing to

do the same, quorum or no quorum."

At this point Markus de Zoute, whose hearing was not as good as it used to be, piped up. "Have the ministers pay for the drive?" he said. "That's a great idea. Let's ask the members of the school society to pray for them."

A cloud of silence fell on the meeting as all six board members contemplated that scenario. It would be nice to have the ministers pay for the shortfall in tuition income this year, but would they have the economic power to do so? One advantage of the proposal was that the number of people supporting the ministers with prayer would be far greater than were the ministers to pray for the society members. And prayer, they all knew, is a mighty weapon.

Hilda Smuiter was the first to speak up. "It's a great idea, Markus," she said. "I like the idea of not burdening our pastors with the duty to pray all the time. Sometimes we use our pastors as if they were our portable prayer wheels. Why, the other day a pastor was asked to open a school-play evening with prayer, and he was so fed up with the automatic request that he stood up, folded his hands, closed his eyes, and said, 'Lordblessthis foodamen.' Everybody smiled at the memory of that event."

"However," Hilda continued, "I might remind you all that two of the five supporting churches are vacant and that pastor Rinker and his wife just had their fifth child. So it would not be fair to have only two pastors pay for this year's tuition shortfall. I know that the effectual fervent prayers of 200

righteous persons availeth much, but the proportion of *ora* over against *labora* is a little out of whack here."

"Well said, Hilda," interjected the chair. "Besides, Markus misunderstood the motion. The motion was that we ask the ministers to *pray* for the tuition reduction drive, not *pay* (he turned his head towards Markus as he shouted the two words).

Markus nodded. "I heard you the first time, he said."

## Same excuse

At this point Brenda Hoostman walked in and everybody let out a sigh of relief. "Here's the quorum," said Henry Slipsema. Brenda Hoostman looked at Slipsema, puzzled. "What did you call me?" she asked with a frown.

"No, no," said Slipsema. "I didn't call you anything. I was just saying that with you here we can vote because we now have a quorum. That's Latin for the required number legally needed to transact business."

"I know what 'quorum' stands for," said Brenda. "I thought you said something about my decorum." Brenda turned to the chair. "Sorry I'm late," she said. "The bridge was up."

"You used to say that when you were late for school 20 years ago," the chairman said with a smile.

"Some bridges take a long time coming down," said Brenda without batting an eye.

Now that Brenda was there, the motion of having ministers

pray for the tuition drive could legally be accepted.

The next item on the agenda was the physical condition of the school building. It was agreed that members of the building committee would come to the school next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. to inspect the state of the building and see if repairs were needed as the principal had claimed.

"But it's dark by that time," complained Bill Van Spritsen.

"Move that everybody set their clocks ahead one hour this coming weekend," said Jack Haddink. "Daylight Saving Time is supposed to start the week following anyway." That motion passed four in favor and two against.

"We still need to approve two sets of minutes of the finance committee," said the chair.

"Only one set of minutes need to be approved," interjected Brenda Hoostman. "The other set was approved last month."

"I stand corrected," said the chair.

"You *sit* corrected, you mean," said Corrie Blaker.

"I *sit* corrected, twice," answered the chair with a generous smile.

At that point Henry Slipsema suggested that all stand up for a few minutes to stretch. The motion was defeated, and the meeting went on, until two hours later the chair asked Markus de Zoute to *pay* at the end of the meeting. Which he did in grand style, with the appropriate number of thees and thous.

## Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

July 1-13 The Voice of Liberty Choir, Nijkerk, the Neth., concert tour "Thank You, Canadians!" July 1: Joint concert with Liberation Choir, Gordon Alcott Arena, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.; July 3: Maranatha CRC, Bowmanville, 8 p.m.; July 5: St. George's Cathedral, Kingston, 7:30 p.m.; July 8: St. Andrew's Presb. Church, Ottawa, 8 p.m.; July 10: Holland Chr. Homes, Brampton, 7:30 p.m.; July 12: Community CRC, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m.; July 13: Melrose United Church, Hamilton, 8 p.m.

July 12 "Wieringermeer Picnic," 10 a.m., Upper Queen's Park Picnic Grounds, Stratford, Ont. Info.: (519) 822-9918.

July 13 Dutch worship service led by Rev. H.A. Vander Windt, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.

July 13 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J.D. Hellinga, 3 p.m., CRC, Aylmer, Ont. Info.: (519) 773-3025.

July 14-19 Summerfest at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. For complete details phone Calvin at (616) 957-6142 (#).

July 14-Aug. 1 Summer school at Wycliffe College and the ICS, Toronto, Ont. For brochure and registration details contact Chris Barrigar at (416) 979-2870, fax (416) 979-5668 or e-mail: c.barrigar@utoronto.ca. (#)

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## News

## Tragedy inspires personal mission to combat drunk driving

Alex Doerksen

NEWMARKET, Ont. — After a tragic accident struck their family seven years ago, Rin and Alex Van Hemert of Newmarket, Ont., began a personal mission to encourage young people to avoid drinking and driving.

her time speaking to high school students, women's groups and courts about her experiences. She was even asked recently by the Ontario Provincial Police to speak to a group of bartenders about the dangers of drinking and driving.

Van Hemert sees some irony in this because six months before the tragic accident she met with her daughter who was going to speak at a large meeting. Van Hemert told Nancy that she would never like to speak to a large group and would feel uncomfortable doing so. But Nancy assured her mother "if you ever have something burning in your heart, you'll be able to speak [to a group]."

Now Van Hemert often speaks to groups of 800 or more high school students at public, Catholic and independent Christian schools. "I usually speak at school assemblies," she explains. "We've had high school principals who've come up and said, 'God sent you.'"

### Book project

For Van Hemert, campaigning against irresponsible drinking and driving "takes up all my time." Together with a friend, Kathy Ferguson, she has started two groups focused on this issue. One is the York branch of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), an international organization which began in the U.S. The other is Prevention of



Alex and Rin Van Hemert sometimes work with the police to help drunk drivers understand the consequences of their actions.

Impaired Driving Injuries (PIDI). Van Hemert is president and public speaker for PIDI.

PIDI is a co-operative group of several organizations, including insurance companies, regional health and mental health departments, and women's groups. Its latest project is a still unpublished book about drinking and driving and how it affects a family. It is written from the perspective of a six-year-old child whose father has been charged with drinking and driving. PIDI is currently looking for a publisher for the book. "We hope to distribute it in schools," says Van Hemert.

Together with Young Drivers of Canada, PIDI has also produced a program called "Don't Make Prom Night Your Last," which includes a kit with taxi phone numbers.

Prom nights are a special concern for Van Hemert because these are often times when teenagers drink excessively, either at high school proms or at parties held afterward. When she speaks to high school students,

she gives them the message that they can have fun without the need for alcohol. She also uses a video called "Close To Home" which teaches students about the effects of alcohol abuse on the family and the community.

### Victims' stories

Van Hemert and others are now working to set up a support network for women with alcohol abuse concerns.

Working with her local member of the provincial parliament, Van Hemert has initiated a court program which is now required for anyone in the York Region convicted of a first or second drinking-and-driving offense.

The program, called "Missing You," involves an offender watching a slide presentation, meeting one or two victims of drunk driving and hearing their stories. The purpose is to sensitize offenders to the consequences of drunk driving. Often offenders are only concerned with the effects drunk driving has on themselves, such as losing their license and paying a fine, says Van Hemert.

"When people drink and drive there are no winners," says Van Hemert. "Every Mother's Day you wait for the call that doesn't come. Every Father's Day is spent at the cemetery."

Van Hemert and Ferguson were recently honored for their work by the Newmarket Beta Sigma Phi group, which named them First Ladies of the Year and gave them each a Certificate of Recognition for their work in the community.

Alex Van Hemert, who works as a part-time truck driver, also speaks at schools about alcohol abuse. The Van Hemerts attend Cedarview Community Church (Pentecostal) in Newmarket.



PHOTOS COURTESY ALEX AND RIN VAN HEMERT

Nancy and Gordon Riegert, daughter and son-in-law of the Van Hemerts, were killed by a drunk driver in 1990. Their daughter, Jessica, survived.

In 1990, the Van Hemert's only daughter and son-in-law died when their car was struck by a drunk teenaged driver. Their daughter, Nancy, was expecting a baby. Since the accident, Rin and Alex have struggled to deal with their grief and help their young granddaughter, who was three at the time of the accident, cope with the death of her parents.

Today, Rin Van Hemert (nee Vander Steen) spends much of

## Bible not allowed to guard ballot box

Bert Witvoet

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. — Alice Smit was taken aback when the chief returning officer of the Prince George-Bulkley Valley riding told her on June 2 to remove the Bible from the ballot box and replace it with a piece of paper.

Smit has been poll clerk or district returning officer in polling stations at least six times in past years, and she was always told to bring a Bible, which she had to place on the slot of the ballot box. On voting day, a woman complained about the practice, says Smit, and a phone

call to Ottawa by the chief returning officer led to the directive to remove the Bible.

### Gradual erosion

According to Rachel Forsythe at Elections Canada in Ottawa, the practice of placing a Bible on top of the ballot box goes back many years but "we have been slowly moving away from the practice."

She thinks the practice arose out of a concern to remind voters and polling clerks that voting is a serious business. Also, placing a Bible over the slot prevented people from

pushing other material into the ballot box.

But because of immigration patterns that brought many people to Canada for whom the Bible has no meaning or is offensive, the practice has fallen away, says Forsythe, who was surprised that it was still being followed in some ridings.

There is nothing in the present Elections Act that prescribes the use of a Bible, she says.

Another official at Elections Canada says that there have not been Bibles at federal elections since 1987.

## News Digest

### Montreal store caught in language Web

MONTREAL (CP) — The Quebec government has ordered a Montreal-based computer store, Micro-Bytes Logiciels, to translate its English-only Internet site into French.

Micro-Bytes withdrew its site after receiving a notice from the Office de la langue française, which enforces Quebec's language laws. When the story hit a local newspaper, "we immediately got flooded with a response to not to [remove]," says manager Mark Silverman. "We were back online within 24 hours."

The company had until July 2 to comply with the order. It has consulted with lawyers and could decide to fight back on grounds of intimidation and censorship, says Silverman. He argues that there are no laws telling him what language he must use if he advertises on radio, TV, or the Internet.

### Canterbury Cathedral charges admission

LONDON (CP) — Canterbury Cathedral, spiritual home of the worldwide Anglican Church, will charge entrance fees to Sunday visitors. Cathedral authorities say their concerns were prompted by safety, not economics. They are keen to avoid disruptive and dangerous crowding in the cathedral, which attracts more than 1.7 million visitors a year.

This year, the cathedral is celebrating the 1500th anniversary of the arrival in Canterbury of St. Augustine, who brought Christianity to Britain, so a sharp increase in pilgrims is expected.

### Lost coins pay for second honeymoon

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Craig Davidson of Phoenix, Arizona, has picked up more than \$5,170 in coins over the 120,000 miles he's jogged since 1978, reports the *Christian Science Monitor*. The collected dimes, nickels and pennies that other people dropped paid for his second honeymoon in Hawaii.

"I asked my tax guy if I should declare it," says Davidson. "He said, one, they wouldn't believe it, and two, nobody's that honest to report a penny he found on the ground."